

White Paper

Standardized Work: The Power of Consistency

Brian D. Krichbaum

January 23, 2008

© Process Coaching Inc. All Rights Reserved
www.processcoachinginc.com



Standardized Work: The Power of Consistency

One of the most important tools of lean manufacturing is standardized work. When starting a 5S program, the cleaning, organizing, and developing of sustainable practices is done so the elements of work can be standardized. In lean product development deployments, by developing and releasing design guidelines, we are in effect implementing standardized work for engineers.

The principles of lean and flow production do not work well when everyone is allowed to choose the method or sequence in which to do the job; quality suffers, and productivity drops. This reduces throughput and the carefully developed production system develops unanticipated bottlenecks.

Standardized Work: The Principles

Standardized work is a detailed, documented and visual system by which associates develop and follow a series of predefined process steps. It should be used whenever the work requires completing a series of tasks. Production workers, shipping departments, and warehousing teams all can benefit from implementing standardized work.

The detailed process steps which we call standardized work represent the current best practices for workers to follow in the completion of their jobs. They are designed to minimize process variation introduced by the worker and to eliminate unnecessary motion. This reduces waste, eases problem solving and enhances productivity within a particular job or set of jobs.

Without standardized work, continuous improvement activities are not manageable because processes which are in a constant state of change cannot be improved. Detailed understanding of the steps needed to be taken to complete tasks is necessary to eliminate root causes and permanently resolve issues. When workers utilize various methods to complete their work, it is not possible to develop this understanding. Therefore, standardized work provides the baseline required for continuous improvement.

Like everything in lean manufacturing, standardized work is focused on what workers need to do to satisfy the customer. Unlike the routers developed by engineering, which focus on the part and how it is processed, standardized work focuses on the workers and what steps they must take to produce the part. Maintenance and improvement of the standardized work documentation is the responsibility of the work teams.

With standardized work implemented, production workers, supervisors, and engineers no longer have to work from memory. The process documentation provides a baseline, a ***standard*** which is referenced whenever someone new is trained on the job. The standard provides consistent training results even if different managers or operators are used to train new workers.