

Lean Leadership Tool – Get Out on The Floor and Observe

Lean Leadership: Understand One Of Your Roles In The Improvement Process

• Get Out on The Floor and Observe

Leaders in any organization need to get out on the shop floor or in the workplace often and observe what is happening to look for opportunities for improvement. It is important to go where the action is. You cannot truly understand how your organization is performing and what is the culture within it by staying in the office and looking at charts and reports.

Talk and listen to the people on the shop floor. While you are talking with them, instill the importance of following their Standardized Work. Tasks must be done in a repeatable manner to ensure that the quality expectations of the customer are met. Use these discussions as an opportunity to share the business goals of the company and make sure that you point out how these company goals align with the goals that the people have within their teams on the shop floor.

Key areas that the Leader should understand prior to going out and exhibiting Lean Leadership on the shop floor is:

- Go See What Is Happening.
- Ask Why Things Happen the Way They Do
- Show Respect for the People

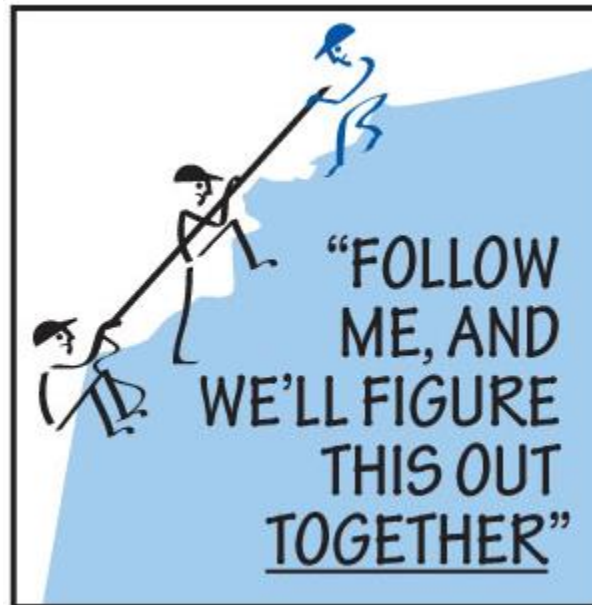
Grasp the Situation

When heading out on the shop floor make sure you spend time to “Grasp the Situation”. Find out what the purpose of the area is. Make sure that you get a clear understanding of the process that is being followed. This is a good opportunity to review the “Process Flow Diagram” for the area. Also, get an understanding of what the people do in the area and what they are responsible for. As a manager, it is necessary that not only you but the people on the floor fully understand the situation before any improvement can take place. This is necessary to ensure that the correct improvements are being made to improve the area and not cause a set back.

A manager must interact with the people on floor. This is a key to achieving continuous improvements and making sure that those improvements are successful.

Know Your Purpose

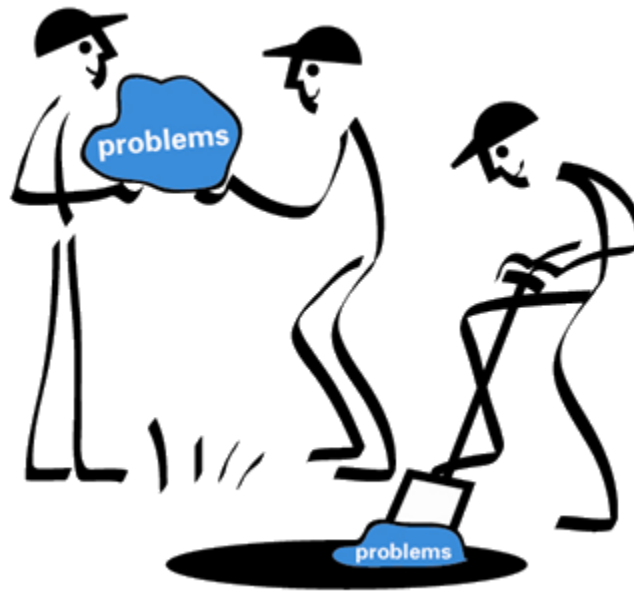
You must have a clear purpose of what you are trying to accomplish when you are going to a specific area. Ask yourself, “Why are you going to this area?” and “What Am I Trying to Learn in This Area?” When you get to the area look at the environment that is in the area. Is it organized? Is the value stream evident? Are standards visible? How is the Workplace Organization and Housekeeping in this area? Can you observe any obvious signs of waste in the area? How safely are the people working in the area?



Types of Waste

Always make sure that you can categorize and discuss the types of waste that you are seeing. Make sure that the type of waste is explained to the people and that it is tangible to them by getting them to understand what type of waste it is. This is an opportunity for you to teach and emphasize that waste needs to be taken out and this is a key to improvement in the organization. The types of waste are:

1. Correction
2. Overproduction
3. Waiting
4. Motion
5. Material Movement
6. Inventory
7. Processing
8. And Intellect



Observing

When you get to the floor and in the area, you are going to work with, make sure that you are willing to put the time necessary to do an effective job with your observations and dialogue. This takes true effort on your part to do this effectively and not be distracted by the day to day tasks and interruptions that you may get during this exercise. Make sure you have humility when hearing comments that may not necessarily be complimentary.

Prior to your observation exercise, test the locations or positions that you want to go to. Be prepared to be able to record any of the observations or questions that you may have. One important note is to not make any assumptions on what you see. If there is a question that you have, make sure you get into a good dialogue with the people in the area. They are the ones who understand the process the best.

Check for activities and things done correctly. What is the customer quality like and what is the current level of throughput in the area? Is it on target? Do the people know what the quality and responsiveness targets are? Is this well communicated by the team's leadership?

Look for the standard processes that are used throughout the plant and are they functioning effectively.

Countermeasures

Get a firm commitment from the people that you have dialogued with on the improvements that are needed based on the observations that you have made with them. If the improvements require additional planning and discussion within the team, get an agreement on when they will meet and what the target date is for completion of the improvement. It must be remembered that to get work done you must know, "Who is Going to Do What and When?". Unless you can answer that, work will not get done.

Summary

Leadership Walks and Observation Tours are an important part of a good manager's duties. This enables them to:

- 1 Understand what is happening on the shop floor,
- 2 Have discussions with people on the floor in their environment that they are comfortable in
- 3 Communicate the goals of the business
- 4 Ensure the business goals are aligned with the goals within the team
- 5 A chance to interact personally with the people on the shop floor
- 6 Reiterate the importance of meeting the customer's quality expectations
- 7 Stress the importance of continuous improvement and the elimination of waste
- 8 Stress the necessity for following Standardized Work to meet the quality and responsiveness expectations.
- 9 Drive safe work habits.



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