

Improving Organisation in the Workplace with 5S



From Possibility...

Northamptonshire Probation Service decided to introduce an organisation-wide Lean implementation project and one of the techniques they adopted, to improve Workplace Organisation and involve the staff in the improvement process, was 5S.

5S is now associated with the Toyota Production System or Lean Manufacturing but it originated in the USA and was one of Henry Ford's tools known as CANDO. It was a workplace organisation tool and its potential was spotted by the Toyota team when they were designing their own production system. Although the phrase 'can do' has meaning in English it meant little to the Toyota team so naturally they translated it into a phrase that had meaning in Japanese and came up with 5S. Oddly when the technique became popular in the West most people opted for the Japanese phrase and not the original version.

Both acronyms describe a five step approach to Workplace Organisation.

FORD (CANDO)	JAPANESE (5S)	ENGLISH
Clean Up	Seiri	Sort
Arrange	Seiton	Set in Order (Simplicity)
Neatness	Seisu	Shine (Sweep or Scrub)
Discipline	Seiketsu	Standardise
Ongoing Improvement	Shitsuki	Sustain



The benefits of 5S are numerous; it removes waste, encourages improvement, supports visual management and involves the entire workforce in the introduction of Lean or continuous improvement. Within the Probation environment 5S also has the potential to have a major impact on the three main stakeholder groups.

Similar to many public service organisations Northamptonshire Probation Service has many strategic partners and it is not unusual for their representatives to visit the Northamptonshire offices. First impressions count and as visitors walk through an office or past notice boards into meeting rooms they form an impression of the organisation they are visiting and its ability to manage its own workplace. This may influence their view of the organisation's overall capability.

Another major stakeholder are the staff who may become blind to the chaos that others can see. A focus on improving the working environment can be motivational but it also encourages improvement and confirms that they can influence change.

Perhaps the most critical stakeholder group are the offenders many of whom are used to a chaotic environment. If they are frequently introduced to an apparently similar environment, when they visit their probation officer or attend group meetings, they may see this as acceptable or the norm.



OUR APPROACH

We adopted a classic approach to implementing 5S and trained Unit Managers, typically SPOs, in Lean and the implementation of 5S. This included an exercise to demonstrate the benefits available and examples of other successful implementations. It was then their responsibility to pass the message onto their staff and lead the implementation in their areas. Progress was monitored once a month at the Lean Working Party meeting, which was led by a Director, and had management representation from across the organisation. Support and encouragement was provided if needed.

As with all implementations new lessons were learnt, some of which came from unexpected successes and others from problems encountered. Towards the end of the project it became apparent that there were significant parts of the office environment that remained untouched by 5S. They were principally the common areas: the stairs, corridors and notice boards. The Unit Managers had addressed their areas but much of what was seen by visitors was overlooked. Unfortunately in an office where storage space was limited, the common areas were frequently used for 'temporary' storage. The problem was easily overcome by involving the administrative team with the manager responsible for estate management in the implementation.

To Actuality...

The Implementation

5S unlike many Lean tools has a very structured approach with completion being the introduction and maintenance of the fifth 'S'. Unfortunately, many do not get past the second 'S' often seeing the implementation as no more than a bit of good housekeeping. Northamptonshire's journey encountered problems but they also found innovative solutions.

Sort – Seiri – Clean up

The implementation of this first step is usually the simplest and most popular of all the 5S steps. The approach requires the 5S team to agree a list of items that should be removed. In the training a comprehensive list is provided, but the 5S teams are encouraged to design their own lists which they think may be appropriate to their area. Typically they include outdated manuals, duplicate or broken items and items no longer used. A red tagging exercise is then undertaken when all items that match the descriptions on the list are 'red tagged'. In practice, this involved putting a 'post-it' note on the items that are thought to meet the descriptions on the list before placing them into a 'quarantine' area. If not claimed as useful by a member of the team or another team they are eventually disposed of.

Unfortunately Northamptonshire Probation had just implemented a clear desk policy and in some areas there was confusion with some thinking they had already introduced 5S, with others being quite clear about the scale and purpose of the task. One of the local offices ordered a skip, quickly filled it and later ordered a further one. It can be surprising how much 'junk' an office can store.

Set in Order – Seiton - Arrange

The previous step creates space by removing everything that is not needed and allowing what remains to be organised. This step, set-in-order, uses the space to organise the office area and address one of the seven wastes 'movement,' by ensuring that time is not wasted searching for items. 'Set-in-order' is often summarised as a 'place for everything and everything in its place. Visual management techniques are frequently used to colour code items matching them with the space where they should be located. This makes it easy to place items in their designated location, as well as recognising when an item is missing.

Within Northamptonshire Probation the approach was at times much more pragmatic. The removal of outdated and duplicate documents resulted in some county-wide team members being unable to find material they had regularly used in the past. This alone drove a need to have the remaining critical material and equipment 'set-in order' so that everyone could easily find what they needed with the confidence that they were using the most recent versions.

Unpaid Work is, at times, very similar to a manufacturing environment, so Lean tools which originated in manufacturing are often easier to implement. In Northamptonshire Unpaid Work, they set-in-order the work tools with clear labels and in the workshops with shadow boards to show precisely where each tool belongs.

Shine – Seisu – Neatness

Shine originated from operators cleaning their own machines, and consequently being able to quickly identify potential problems such as oil leaks. It is not dissimilar to washing a car once a week when any chips, scrapes or small dents are also identified allowing action to be taken before the problem gets any worse. It is often the step when many 5S implementations fail. Some do not see the need for 'Shine' or see it as someone else's responsibility.

Within Northamptonshire Probation this step of the implementation found resonance with Unpaid Work. They included the offenders in the implementation and tools were cleaned before being returned to their clearly labelled/identified locations. The vans were also cleaned at the end of each day by the offenders. This not only introduced a good working discipline, but also ensured that the next team to use the tools and vans could not only quickly find them, but guaranteed they were in a good clean working condition.

The training room; which at the start of the project was often found to have dirty cups left behind, and chairs and tables in a different position for each meeting, was subjected to 5S. Now instead of having to schedule time into a meeting to clean and prepare the room, the group that last used the room cleans it and returns it to its original position for the next meeting. The Information Systems team similarly have identified that 'shine' can be applied to their data, and a project to cleanse the data is being prepared.

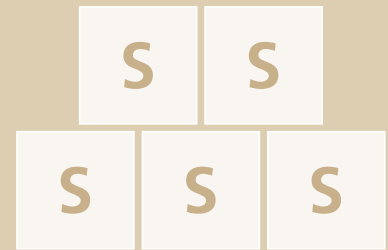
Standardise – Seiketsu - Discipline

Standardise is perhaps the simplest step to understand - it fits well with all other Lean techniques and is important in ensuring that a consistent approach is adopted. The training room in Northampton left laminated instructions in the room, advising how the room should be left at the end of each meeting. To date this has worked well, but there are also examples of where the approach was adopted and failed. The Group Training Rooms were notorious for being left in a chaotic state. The Accredited Programmes Team undertook a structured 5S implementation that included the Group Training Rooms, leaving laminated instructions on how the room should be left at the end of each meeting. Unfortunately, the room was used by other teams some of which had not progressed as far as Accredited Programmes, and they returned the room to its former chaotic state.

Standardisation cannot always be implemented by one team alone. Areas which are used by more than one team and not owned by either, need to agree a joined up approach or give ownership to one team and agree to abide by their standardisation.



Northamptonshire Probation CS



Sustain – Shitsuke – Ongoing Improvement

Having come so far with the implementation of 5S the final step is to maintain and build upon the gains achieved and prevent any slippage. There are many approaches that can be adopted but something formal must be put in place. Northamptonshire Probation is currently using a Lean Working Party to manage 'Sustain,' but will eventually have to adopt other techniques.

The most popular tends to be a monthly 5S audit, with the results often being displayed on Information Boards. The persons who complete the audit vary from organisation to organisation; some allocate the task to team members, with each person in the team taking their turn. Others invite another team to audit, this can cause some competition but it does introduce a fresh pair of eyes. It has also been known for teams from other offices to be invited to complete the audit. This can have the benefit of not only providing a fresh pair of eyes, but also introducing new ideas from the other office. Whatever approach is adopted the results of the audit, if shared with the team, will maintain the benefits delivered by 5S and encourage continuous improvement.

THE BENEFITS

Quantifying the benefits of 5S is difficult, not because they don't exist but because they are often small but frequent. Some of the benefits such as: the involvement of all staff and the challenge to the organisational culture and its eventual change are substantial, but will take time to achieve.

Northamptonshire Probation Services Unpaid Work team probably delivered the largest benefits over the short term, through engaging and involving the offenders. Tools and vans were cleaned and kept orderly, but it also demonstrated to offenders the benefits of a structured and organised workplace.

The concept was also innovatively translated by the Information Systems team and, should they drive it to a conclusion, they will not only deliver quantifiable benefits, but will also have demonstrated that Lean can be applied in an IT environment.

Other parts of the organisation are gaining benefits and overcoming obstacles. Northamptonshire can not yet say it has fully implemented Lean or 5S but progress has been made and providing the Lean Working Party continues to monitor progress and enforce the 'Sustain' step of 5S, further benefits will be delivered and a change in culture achieved.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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