

5S - for maximum workplace efficiency

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What is 5s?

Ever heard of 5S? It's a Japanese methodology used to make the workplace more efficient. Sometimes it appears in an extended form as 6S, or even 8S (see below).

Developed in the late 1980s by Hiroyuki Hirano in Japan, 5S is an example of a **lean manufacturing** technique.

It certainly seems to pay dividends - it's in use at many successful Japanese companies. Honda and Toyota claim that 25%-35% of all customer-seen problems

are the result of not adhering to 5S principles. It counts a

The good news is that it applies just as much to printing as it does to other industries.

Why is it called that?

5S is so called because it is divided into 5 different 'phases' each beginning with the letter 'S' in the original Japanese: *Seiri*, *Seiton*, *Seiso*, *Seiketsu* and *Shitsuke*. By great good fortune the English translation of each word also begins with S.

How does this apply to you?

In this modern short-of-time world we often neglect good organization, and that in turn can create inefficiencies which take up even more time. This applies not just in the print-room, but in the office too, and even in the organization of the items in your desktop computer.

5S was designed to help. It will also impress the hell out of your customers!

Anyway - here it is, then - 5S for your company.

Phase 1: Sort then Store or Sling

Sort through your office and your shop-floor and either put into store or sling out everything that is not essential. When was the last time you really had a good clear-out?

You mean you're going to re-use that old stuff? Don't make me laugh! And those extra promotional tickets for the big event last summer? What about those old job tickets? You printed the jobs two years ago!

Phase 2: Set in Order

With an eye to efficiency, arrange your departments and equipment and stores in the way that streamlines your workflow and minimizes effort. Make sure there is a place for everything and that everything is in its place.

Phase 3: **S**weep and Shine

Let's face it, many print-shops could do with a serious clean-up. Before going off shift, make it a rule that the work area is cleaned and tidied. That applies to office staff as well as shop floor. That way everyone can rely on starting work each day in a clean environment, and confident of knowing where everything is. Being clean and tidy should be a part of daily work - not an extra occasional chore.

Phase 4: **S**tandardize

Doing things in a standard and consistent way helps people operate efficiently and to know their responsibilities. Lay down rules of working and make sure people stick to them.

Phase 5: **S**ustain the discipline

A continuous re-assessment of these principles makes sure they continue to be reinforced as part of daily life, rather than

slipping back into the old slip-shod way of working. Changing circumstances may need reassessment of the first 4 phases, but the principles should be maintained. New equipment and new products make it essential to change things and provide training.

Additional phases:

Because people love to embellish, over the years other phases have been added, which are not really necessary to the core precepts, but may help. These extras aren't really phases – they are just extra rules.

Phase 6: **S**afety

The first 5 phases lead to a safe workplace, but safety should always be reviewed after every change in work practices. Safety as phase 6 was a bit of an afterthought, but some people say it's unnecessary as adherence to the first 5 should result in a safe work-place automatically. It's this phase that

sometimes leads to this discipline being called 6S rather than 5S.

Phase 7: **S**ecurity

This optional seventh phase is identify and remove risks to key business assets, such as machines and to address the well-being of human resources

Phase 8: **S**atisfaction,

It's probably scraping the barrel a bit but some people add satisfaction as a final phase. The idea is that a satisfied workforce can be relied on to engage fully with the 5S principles.

What's that? You already do all this stuff? Then I'm pleased (if a little sceptical). Drop me an email so I can buy shares in your company! 