

STANDARDIZED WORK AND WHY WE MUST DO A BETTER JOB WITH IT!

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Mr Isao Kato teaching at the Train the Trainer course on Standardized Work in Japan.

I was recently invited to Japan for a Train the Trainer Course on standardized work held by Mr. Isao Kato (formerly of Toyota Motor Company). He carefully approved us to pass on this legacy outside of Toyota. This was a great honor which we will do our best to uphold.

This article will attempt to describe:

- What is standardized work?
- How will standardized work benefit your business?
- What is the significance of standardized work?

FIRST OF ALL, WHY DO YOU NEED STANDARDIZED WORK?

The mantra we kept hearing during the training was: "Without standard, there can be no improvement." So far nothing new, right? We've all heard this before.

The key question we need to ask ourselves is, after 30 years of Lean efforts being implemented around the globe, how well are we doing? In my opinion, having met and worked with hundreds of companies, we are not doing too well! Considering, this is the key for mak-

ing Kaizen or Continuous Improvement possible, it is important that we do this better.

Being a TWI Job Instruction trainer, the responsibility falls on me and others in the Lean society to admit we need to do a more solid job.

So what is the benefit to your business to create and adhere to standardized work properly?

- Engagement
- Productivity
- Quality
- Safety
- Cost
- Ergonomics
- Established potential to perform Kaizen over and over again

Too good to be true? Not at all! With a structured approach to the work being done, you will be able to improve all of the above! And the best part is it's not that difficult!

However, it takes the right mindset and management support to be able to succeed. Standardized work is the heart and soul of TPS and therefore Lean, and we need to get serious about it.

WHAT IS STANDARDIZED WORK?

It is a structured process that leads to a description of the desired work pattern in a certain area for a certain individual.

That means it is an individual focused process! It is important to realize a few things around standardized work in order to clearly understand the definition.

- Having a number of work standards in the workplace arranged as a work sequence that flows.
- What is illustrated on the Standardized Work Sheet is actually happening in the workplace.

The supervisor is directly responsible for posting a standardized work document in their area. If the map and reality do not match, please take down the documents! This signals that you are not ready for standardized work yet, so please do Kaizen until you are sure:

- Team members CAN follow the standard
- Team members are trained on the job
- Team members have accepted the new standard

The three elements for standardized work are:

- Takt time
- Sequence
- Standard in process stock

1. TAKT TIME

Obviously, Takt Time = (Time available)/(customer demand). However, it is not commonly used in all areas where it can be an aid. How do you design a process if you don't know what rate it needs to work in?

Do all the processes run at the same speed, or do they differ? This is important to recognize before advancing. You might be spending time and effort on something that has a lot of overcapacity.

Also, when using Takt time, the purpose is not to prove that Takt time works. It is to find all the things you need to work on (Kaizen), so it will work!

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE FROM THIS?

As with all Lean tools, you need to approach it from the right angle. If you only apply the forms and the tools, it will not deliver the desired effect.

Implementing Standardized work is a commitment reaching far beyond the templates.

The way to get results from Standardized work is to put it into a framework of a production system which can handle all the Kaizen needed to get there.

It also requires skills from the supervisors, something that Toyota is taking for granted since they develop supervisors over a long period of time (minimum of 10 years)!

The "standard package" of skills are the "4 J's" from TWI:

- **Job Instruction**
- **Job Relations**
- **Job Methods**
- **Job Safety**

These are all engrained in the culture and used everywhere needed, in its context. To be able to design the process correctly you will need to use all these skills, or you will struggle.

Do you want more knowledge around TWI?

Then a good place to be is the European TWI and Toyota Kata summit – read more on www.twiandkatasummit.eu

2. SEQUENCE

What you want to achieve is a SMOOTH working pattern, often a circular movement. Every time it stops or the sequence moves in reverse, there are your problem areas. In Lean terms, these are defined as obstacles, which need to be overcome.

The key here is to keep the process SMOOTH, flowing like a choreographed dance.

The tools used for this assures that the process does not include waiting time for the operator; that the work sequence starts and stops at the same place; and that the product or service is delivered JIT (the right amount, in the right quality in the right time)

That is proven over the last 70 years to be best for:

- Productivity
- Quality
- Safety
- Cost
- Ergonomics

3. STANDARD IN PROCESS STOCK

It is crucial for supervisors to easily detect if the process is in control or out of control. The simplest way to see this is whether the decided in process stock (standard WIP or queue time) is there or not. If over or under, something in the process is out of control and thus needs attention!

The ability to detect normal or abnormal situations is key for the supervisor and his/her team.

These three elements, once in place, constitute a standardized work process!

HOW ABOUT the recent buzz-word Toyota Kata? Does this mean that is obsolete now? On the contrary! With the correct use of standardized work your ability to design crisp and clear challenges and target conditions increases dramatically. It also gives you a fundamental understanding of your current condition.

Your ability to design Experiments (PDCA) toward your Target Condition relies heavily on your skill in the "4 J's"!

WHAT ABOUT the automation and robotization revolution we see - do we need Standardized work still? In my opinion, as long as there are people involved, they will need to have a process. That process needs to be smooth and producing results as above. Hence standardized work will still apply.

Remember Toyota's principle of Jidoka which translates into Autonomation. That is, automation with a human touch.

The number of people doing the actual work is declining, as it has been for the last 150 years, but we still have millions and millions of people going to work every day. Those people produce things and services and will continue to do so for a considerable future. I see no conflict here; on the contrary.

While designing your workflow, possibilities for automation will arise, just as the possibility and need for human work will come up!

Participants at the Train the Trainer course on Standardized Work together with Mr Isao Kato in Japan.

