

Video: Why 5S? Its Importance and Genesis

First impressions are crucial, and creating the best impression possible is key to lasting success for any organization. Unorganized, untidy, or dirty storefronts and public spaces will virtually guarantee that customers will be repelled and will take their business elsewhere. Additionally, company morale suffers in such an environment. Employees may feel as though the company does not care about itself, and as a result they will care less about the company themselves. On a basic level, disarray may reflect a fundamental problem with operations as it is filled with wastes of space, time, and energy, and interrupts a continuous flow of activities.

On the other hand, a company that is highly organized, does not waste space, flows efficiently, and maintains an attractive appearance tends to be more profitable than one that is unkempt. A well-organized workplace is better for all parties involved.

The Lean methodology for addressing such organizational issues is known as 5S. 5S is a comprehensive system that reduces waste and optimizes productivity by maintaining an uncluttered and visually organized workspace. This organization enables employees to quickly know where objects are stored, reducing search time, as well as see when items are missing from their designated homes. 5S is essentially a “clean up and organization” of the workplace in order to enhance productivity.

5S originates from the Japanese words Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, and Shitsuke. Translated into English, they stand for Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain.

The roots of 5S are often accredited to the Toyota Motor Corporation, who set the foundation with two pillars: Sort and Set in Order. However, Hiroyuki Hirano synthesized the organizational philosophy into an official methodology which he called 5S. In 1995, Hirano published 5 Pillars of the Visual Workplace,

in which he outlined a series of steps that led to waste elimination and a more efficient work space.

5S is often the first step on any Lean journey because it is a physical change that is easy to understand and see, and plays a critical role in sustaining a Lean system. Putting the pillars of 5S into action will lay the foundation upon which all improvements will build. [U](#)