



Lean Summit 2011

SOLVING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

INSPIRATION FOR YOUR LEAN JOURNEY



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The Gemba Walk

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Another Type of Kata

The Gemba Walk Kata

or

The Grasp the Situation Kata



The Gemba Walk

What?

Why?

How?

Who?

When?



What?

- A horizontal journey as a cross-functional team along a value stream across departments, functions, and organizations, to facilitate:
 - ✓ A transformational leap in performance.
 - ✓ Sustainable improvement through PDCA.
 - ✓ Coaching the next generation of line managers.



Why?

- Organizations are vertical, but...
- Value flows horizontally across the organization(s) to customers.
- Managers look up toward the top of the organization (the CEO) for direction, but...
- All value is created at the bottom of the organization where the actual work is done.



Why?

- The current situation along value streams is hard for anyone to grasp, but...
- Sustainable improvement is difficult unless everyone whose actions affect the stream can see and agree on the actual situation.

Therefore: Those touching the stream need to take a walk in order to see and grasp.



How?

- Select a value stream.
- Gather managers from all the verticals touching the stream.
- Take a walk together.

“Go see, ask why, show respect.”

And...never walk alone.



How?

- Start at the customer end (or the pacemaker point.)
- Determine the purpose of this stream.
- Assess the performance gap.
- Follow the process from end to end.
- Ask the people along the stream how they are doing and what they see.

Purpose, process, people.



How?

- Look at the work – the value creating steps to get the design or the product to the customer and through the use cycle.
- Ask about each step: Is it valuable, capable, available, adequate, flexible?
- Ask how the steps are connected: Flow? Pull? Leveled?
- Sum-up: Look for muda, mura, and muri.



How?

- Look at time, distance, and inventories:
 - ✓ How does total time through the value stream compare with value creating time?
 - ✓ How does total distance through the value stream compare with value creating distance?
 - ✓ How do actual inventories compare with standard inventories?

How?

- Look at the management:
 - ✓ Is help available within the work cycle?
 - ✓ Is there standardized work?
 - ✓ Is the state of the process visible?
 - ✓ Is the situation normal or abnormal?

How?

- ✓ Is there a method for improving the work?
- ✓ Who is responsible for the performance of this value stream?
- ✓ How are the conflicts between the needs of the verticals along the stream reconciled with the horizontal flow of the stream?

How?

- Draw a map....or not, depending on the circumstances.
- Remember:

The objective is not to draw a map, to solve a problem, or to do Plan-Do-Check-Act on the spot.

It is to grasp the situation as a management team about the current flow of value across the organization(s).



Who? (The Hard Part)

The ideal walkers:

- The CEO and the COO with the function heads, customers, and suppliers.
- The person responsible for each value stream.

But, in practice:

- ✓ The CEO and COO lack knowledge and courage.
- ✓ No one is responsible for most streams.



Who?

How about you?

- ✓ Improvement team leaders.
- ✓ Consultants.
- ✓ Lower-level managers who take the responsibility and set an example!

Coaching senior managers on gemba walks and urging the assignment of clear responsibility for every value stream.



When?

- Before commencing a lean transformation.
- Multiple times a year for each value stream to refresh gemba knowledge and keep the management team focused on cross functional problems.
- Weekly or daily to grasp the changing situation in real time.



An Example

- The daily gemba walk for senior managers with stand-up meetings at each vertical:
 - ✓ The 8 am walk through the fulfillment value stream to assess the situation.
 - ✓ The 10 am walk across all of the verticals to address value stream issues in real time.



The Gemba Walk

- The best way to truly grasp your situation as an organization – as a community of value creation – so that good, lean things can happen.
- The best way to stay current on your current performance & improvement path.
- Another kata you can learn to practice and learn from practicing.





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GEMBA WALKS

FOREWORD BY JOHN SHOOK





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