

Elements of a Successful 5S Program:

10 Keys to Excellence

Tips From:



The ACCESS Group

Introduction:

You believe you've made the decision to 5S and now you are ready to start. It should be easy to do because everybody knows how to clean up their work area and the facility. But it does not happen as planned. Maybe things get started but quickly fade as other 'priority' issues take over. Or maybe the initial efforts go well but within six months, all of the investment is lost. What went wrong? You say, "We had a plan and we communicated that to everybody".

Maybe you've witnessed the worst scenario of all where someone says, "We already have a 5S program here". You look around to see poor housekeeping, piles of inventory, and the only evidence that a 5S program ever existed is some old worn out sign with a slogan on it about how important 5S is.

You want to do better. You want to set a standard of excellence. You want your 5S efforts to be successful. What are the key components that must be present in any successful 5S program?

After many years of observing and directing 5S implementations and training, we would like to share the most important elements to make any 5S effort a success.

1. You MUST have total and complete management support.

Now this sounds elementary, but it's more complex than you think and it's the number one reason that 5S efforts fall short of the intended result. To have total and complete management support means a real commitment to change the way you run your business. Many times people talk about making these changes, or plan to make these changes, or have meetings about making these changes. In reality, very few understand the true commitment it takes to actually make the changes. But for those few who decide to act and to stay the course, they will achieve excellent results.

2. Keep your focus on specific areas.

While you will eventually want to change the entire operation, you don't want to try to change it all at once. Many times we see companies attempt to implement 5S in a broad, sweeping, short-term effort. As a result there is no real focus and they get a 'surface' clean up that does not change the culture and typically does not last. Instead, focus your efforts on strictly specified areas over a long-term period. The result will be a deeply ingrained implementation of 5S in every area of your operation and an improved commitment to maintaining the new conditions. Having this focused, intense effort occur over a longer period of time will increase the likelihood that you will change the culture in your facility. This means that 5S will change from a 'program' to 'the way you do business'.

3. The 5S effort must be for the Total process.

In most operations, the 5S effort will take place in the production areas. After all, that's the only area that needs it, right? Wrong! If 5S is going to be successful in your operation, it must be applied throughout the entire enterprise. This means it should be applied in areas that are often overlooked such as shipping, receiving, maintenance, tool room, and the front office. Yes, management team, you read the last one correctly, you must apply these same practices in your office as well. It's difficult for your associates to believe that 5S is important if you don't set the right example. So, if you are going to lead the way for this change in your organization, be sure you lead by example.

4. Use 5S Drills daily to maintain the discipline

Beyond the initial implementation, it takes a great deal of discipline to maintain the investment you have made. One of the best ways to keep the attention on 5S at front and center is to have daily 5S drills. These drills consist of daily activities that occur at designated times in your operation to continue your 5S work. It allows your team to have the time to complete the ongoing tasks required to maintain or improve the conditions in their work areas. This ongoing commitment to 5S creates the environment that will eventually lead to a world-class effort. And remember, these drills should occur in every part of your organization. Again, lead by example.

5. Use Before and After Photos to create ownership.

Again, simple to do but often overlooked. Before you begin the 5S implementation, take photos in every area of your organization. Then as you complete each area, take a photo of the improved conditions. For additional impact, you may also want to take a photo of all of the things that were removed from the area during your 5S event. Post before and after pictures in the work area along with a photo of the people responsible for ownership of the 5S effort there. The photos will serve as a reminder of what has been accomplished and recognize those who made it happen.

6. Use Creative ideas to reward the 5S efforts.

The rewards for the 5S efforts usually fall into two categories. One is the recognition of the new implementation efforts as they occur. The other is to recognize the ongoing excellence achieved in maintaining 5S. In either case, be sure to celebrate your successes! Be creative and have fun with it! Too often, the rewards are too formal or too reserved to create any level of excitement. C'mon!, your people have just worked their tails off to make these changes. HAVE A CELEBRATION!! Invite the whole plant to a review of the 5S efforts presented by the team that did the work. Show pictures, talk about results and then have some fun with it. Some of the best celebrations we've seen involve a game show format with prizes given for answering

questions about the 5S efforts. Others have celebrated by having management perform some crazy stunts. Just use your imagination.

7. Put an Audit process in place.

You've heard it said that what gets measured gets done. Its no different here, to be successful in 5S you must have an audit process in place. These audits must occur on a regularly scheduled basis and they must be done accurately. There are a number of different methods for performing audits but the key is to measure the desired performance so you achieve the desired outcome. Once completed, the scores should be posted in a highly visible location for all to see.

8. Keep scores calibrated.

Over time, it is human nature to allow the 5S scores to become inflated. This is a condition that I refer to as 'score creep'. To prevent this condition, it is recommended that you use a third party on an occasional basis to audit your 5S performance. An outside, third party will give you a more objective view of your 5S scoring and as a result will assist you in keeping your scores calibrated at the correct levels.

9. Give ownership of 5S to your leaders

Notice that I did not say your management team. While the ultimate responsibility and direction to initiate 5S must come from the management level, the ongoing upkeep of 5S must lie elsewhere. When you implement 5S, natural leaders will step forward and take ownership in the 5S effort. Many times they are not the formally designated supervisors in your organization. Allow these new leaders to assume that role and they will help you to achieve the long-term results you want.

10. Get help to get started.

Yes, you could try to do this on your own. But the fact is that many have tried and most have failed. Learn from experience, preferably someone else's. Remember, 5S is simple in concept, but difficult to do. Get someone with lots of 5S experience to help you get things started. It's an investment you have to make, but its nothing compared to the costs of a failed 5S effort. With the proper instruction, you'll easily get better results, fewer mistakes, and you'll have more fun.

About The ACCESS Group:

Founded almost eight years ago, and led by seasoned experts, The ACCESS Group (TAG) has become known as an industry leader in Lean Enterprise Services. TAG consistently delivers superior Manufacturing and Engineering Support Services that get Bottom Line Results for our clients. Using practical applications of Lean Enterprise principles, TAG has performed numerous 5S Implementations and Training Events with outstanding results. TAG has the expertise and the total project support to give companies a cost effective solution that delivers these critical services on-time and within budget. In addition to these services, TAG also provides Plant Relocation Services, Maintenance Services, and Contract Resources to clients all over the world, including many Fortune 100 companies.

This unique blend of services offers our clients a solution that is not only cost effective but a single source solution as well. By providing these services we help our clients to 'CHANGE THEIR BUSINESS WHILE THEY RUN THEIR BUSINESS'.

About the Author:

Kevin Saunders is a director with The ACCESS Group. Kevin has over 20 years of experience in operational management and business development. He has held various management and leadership positions with two Fortune 100 corporations. In his prior position, Kevin consulted with independent business owners to maximize productivity, reduce operational costs and increase sales. He has also held various management positions where he had responsibility for operations and facility management. He has worked with numerous clients to successfully implement the components of Lean, including many 5S programs.



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