

Planting and Paving

Using leader standard work to pave the way for a disciplined management system to lead and manage in a continuous improvement environment

By Senior Management Consultants, Gary Rascoe and Carl Deeley



Would you like to double or triple the effectiveness of your operations management team? Many team leaders and supervisors spend much of their time ‘firefighting’ vs. fire proofing. We often use the analogy of the movie Ground Hog Day where the main character, Bill Murray, awakened everyday to the same problem. Similarly, most supervisors and managers fall into the firefighting trap – everyday there is another fire to fight.

When you fall into that routine of reacting to what comes each day it is difficult to think about improvements. Working to standards is a pre-requisite to continuous improvement. Most leaders I know are very frustrated with this firefighting routine and would welcome the opportunity to break out of it. The key differentiator for successful companies is their formula for leadership. Their management system is composed of tools and management techniques that reinforce a clear focus on the things that make a business run predictably and efficiently.

In order for this to happen we need to concentrate on and standardize our leaders’ activities

that drive meaningful behaviors and support our key performance metrics. Leader standard work, the backbone of hour-by-hour, day-to-day performance, is determined by “what needs attention now” to maintain or improve safety, quality, cost and delivery metrics. We use it to drive critical activities for leader-to-associate interaction. By using leader standard work, managers identify areas for improvement, encourage associates to problem-solve, and provide positive reinforcement.

“The tools are the easy part. The difficult part is building a disciplined management system that defines standard work, rewards correct behavior, audits results and holds people accountable.”

Five Key Ingredients of Leader Standard Work

Leader standard work—helps management react in a consistent predictable manner; this in turn creates the expected behaviors that characterize the business culture. There are five key ingredients of effective leader standard work; overlap, visual controls, reward systems, audits and accountability/discipline. You cannot pick and choose. Synergy comes from the combination of all five ingredients. Together, they form a recipe for change. Just like a cake recipe, if you leave out one or more of the key ingredients the system result will be a ‘flop’.

1. Leader standard work must have **overlap** from lower management to upper management. If a line leader is responsible for filling out an SQDC board hourly, the supervisor should monitor the SQDC board several times a day, and the plant manager should check it daily. This detail must be spelled out in the standard work for each individual.

2. It must be **visual** at a glance to determine the status of the standard work. Simply telling someone return a tool to its proper place is not nearly as effective as creating a shadow board for it. If it is not visual, it probably won't happen.

3. The system must also **reward** desired behaviors such as abnormality management, root cause analysis and problem prevention vs. firefighting. It is responsibility of senior management to design the reward systems and culture to drive these behaviors. Similarly, there must be consequences for those who choose not to follow the new standard. Without systems linked to performance, people will fall back into the habit of how they used to do things. The rewards need to be a combination of recognition and pay. Publicly recognizing early adopters will send the right message to the CAVE people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) and those that have a “wait-and-see” mindset.

4. There must be system **audits**. These audits must be made easy by the use of simple visual controls such as the T-card process. People tend to do what is measured. If we are not actively auditing the process, the perceived message is that it is unimportant. For example, if we state that we have a 5S system or performance boards in place, but we fail to audit them, it won't be long before they disappear or become meaningless.

5. Senior management must establish the **discipline** of following the system by walking the walk, not just talking it. This means active involvement and changing systems when needed. If we have audits in place, but there are no ‘teeth’ behind them, the message will be that they are unimportant. If we allow people to simply go through the motions, or ‘pencil whip’ the process, the system will fail. Once all of the ingredients are in place, it is much easier to hold people accountable. Not every leader will make it successfully through the lean transition.

If you lay the groundwork for right behaviors, (overlapping standard work and visual controls at all levels), supported by a management system (audits, rewards, accountability and discipline) you ensure that basic tasks are ‘predictably’ taken care of and break out of the Ground Hog problem pattern.

Five Stages of Lean Leadership

Stage 1 (Lopsided) – Ninety percent or more of day characterized by firefighting and expediting materials

Stage 2 (Low) –80 percent of day spent firefighting, expediting and attending meetings off the floor. Occasional, but inconsistent use of SQDC boards and hour by hour charts.

Stage 3 (Lean Light) – Sixty percent of the day spent on firefighting, expediting and attending meetings off the floor Audits at least one standard work per week and implements one point kaizen per week. SQDC and hour-by-hour charts used regularly and properly. Continuous improvement activity is still handled primarily by the continuous improvement office.

Stage 4 (Lean/Green Basic) –40 percent of day spent on firefighting, expediting and attending meetings off the floor. Audits at least three standard work documents per week and implements at least three point kaizens per week.

Stage 5 (Lean Leader/Mastery) –Twenty percent or less of the day spent on firefighting, expediting and attending meetings off the floor. All employees that report to leads actively submit and implement ideas for continuous improvement. MDI* activities are fully deployed and SQDC board used as the primary measure of success.

* Visit www.tbmcg.com/MDI to learn more about Managing for Daily Improvement training.

Examples in Practice:



Hayward Pool Products, Clemmons, NC

We implemented the task card (T-card) standard work system at the Hayward Pool Products plant located in Clemmons, NC. Hayward had been on its lean journey for about 10 years but still faced the issue that most of their leaders' time was spent fire-fighting. Managing for Daily Improvement (MDI) had helped but they were still struggling with getting people to be more proactive. When we approached Hayward about leader standard work, they decided to give it a try. Plant manager Don Alcorn, decided to pilot the process in their molding department. The injection molding department is the single largest department in the company with 160 employees. There are six supervisors, one rotational supervisor, six leads and one back up lead.

Since developing leader standard work, molding manager, Don Dial notes that the proactive activity of his team leaders and supervisors has doubled and has gone from 20 percent to 40-45 percent of their day. The supervisors regularly complete between 85 to 90 percent of their standard activities on a daily basis. Don believes this is due to following a standard and becoming more efficient at managing the process. Results are similar to set up reduction or TPM (Total Productive Maintenance) events. When we use tools such as spaghetti charts, we always see wasted motion. By organizing and standardizing, we develop a routine that reduces waste and frees time up to perform more value added activities.

The next step at Hayward is twofold. Alcorn and Dial are planning to "up the ante", by increasing the number of continuous improvement activities (proactive) that are part of the standard work. The next step is to spread the leader standard work across all areas of production, including molding technicians and to other departments

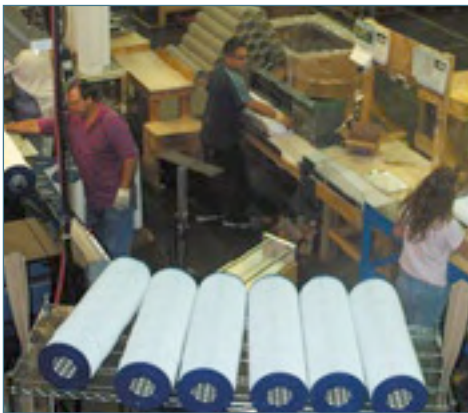
including assembly. As leader standard work is expanding plant wide, behaviors among all leaders should become more consistent. When asked about the benefits of Leader Standard Work, Don noted that it helps to link all the lean processes together. He said, "We expect the ROI will be five-fold down the road as we improve how we utilize a lean management system for leaders. Leader standard work is helping us sustain past improvements and create a culture where continuous improvement becomes a way of life."

McCain Foods, Australia

At McCain the lessons learned are very similar. McCain has linked leader standard work closely together with MDI (Managing for Daily Improvement). Their leader standard work is very specific and easy to audit. The company holds its supervisors accountable for these leadership activities.

A list of best practices learned from the McCain and Hayward implementations would be:

- Leader standard work is an effective way to train new employees and get them up to speed immediately.
- Sequence the standard work activities as they should occur during the day and group cards accordingly. This will make the process faster.
- Define the six to eight most important focus activities for leaders. Define what provides the largest benefit to the company (Pareto Principle) and develop individual cards for each activity. These should be linked to the same activities we train in our MDI Process. Examples include: point kaizen, safety and ergonomic improvements, abnormality management, standard work, quality improvement, visual controls and 5S. Be specific on



what is expected. Writing standard work that is too generic will create variation and will make it difficult to audit.

- Just like any standard work, don't let best become the enemy of better. Review the standard work every 90 days or so and determine how it can be improved.
- If auditing reveals that the supervisor regularly completes the activity on time, then reduce the audit frequency for that item. Add other items that provide more benefit.
- Limit details of basic activities such as checking attendance and email. These can be written on one or two cards vs. having multiple cards.
- It takes strong leadership to make it work.

As we change leader behavior, we will begin to change the culture of the entire company. As sustainment improves, the focus will shift to continuous improvement. ■

Visual Tools for Leader Standard Work

Most companies have a loosely defined standard work that is seldom referenced. When we monitor what supervisors actually do, it is dramatically different from the desired behaviors. In fact, most supervisors spend the majority of their day firefighting and expediting – that is when they are not in meetings. We need to create an environment where the focus is on coaching, abnormality management, training and continuous improvement.

One way to prevent backsliding and drive accountability is to use “task cards” a visual management tool for leader standard work. A colleague of mine, John Alford, used them at Ford. Each card contains actionable behavior—what the leader should be doing. The cards are held in a rack for easy access and review. Each card has a red dot (to do) on one side and a green dot (completed) on the other. At the beginning of the day, all daily task cards show red dots.

During the course of the day, the manager turns the card over to show the green dot as tasks are completed. If there is a special reason why a task is left uncompleted, the card should display a third dot, typically yellow, at the bottom. Anyone walking through the area can see at a glance what percentage of the tasks have been completed at any given time. If one leader routinely completes just 50 percent of the tasks and everyone else completes 80 percent, then that's a signal that something needs to be addressed. It allows for intervention before problems get out of hand.

Additionally, the card should have a section for “reasons why,” similar to hour-by-hour charts. A supervisor can use that as a starting point to get to the root cause of the problem.

