

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 (or several.)
 - Gather managers from all the verticals touching the stream(s).
 - Take a walk together.
 - Look at the work for muda, mura, and muri, flow, pull, and leveling.
- “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?

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

The objective is not to draw a map, to solve a problem, or to Plan, Do, Check, Act.

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 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.
- ✓ Even Senior Advisors!

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:
 - ✓ 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.
- Another kata you can learn to practice and learn from practicing.

