

## HOW "5S METHODOLOGY" CUT 1-HOUR FROM EVERY PRODUCTION START-UP FOR OTTAWA MOULD CRAFT

### At a Glance...

**Industry:** Manufacturing

**Problem:** Production speed and safety issues

**Solution:** Toyota Motor Corporation's 5S concept: remove non-essential items (sort), organize shop tools (straighten), define material laydown (standardize), clean work areas (shine), and set audits (sustain)

**Results:** Faster production start-up and a boost to worker morale

### The Problem

Success looked certain for Ottawa Mould Craft—this small, Ottawa manufacturing company was growing rapidly, keeping 125 factory workers on their toes.

The company was flourishing, but behind the factory's doors, there was a mess. Excess tools and scrap materials crowded workstations, dust and dirt collected on forgotten equipment, and workers were cramming stacks of finished goods between machines because they couldn't find any better space inside the cluttered factory. Morale seemed low, and safety issues were increasing.



### The Solution

Akin to Six Sigma, the core concepts of the 5S methodology are: sort, straighten, shine, standardize, and sustain. Formed by the Toyota Motor Corporation, 5S is a way to apply a strict "housekeeping" discipline to industry, to achieve the best and most efficient results.

Ottawa Mould Craft (OMC) decided to implement 5S in their factory and empowered one person from their management team, Dante, as their 5S champion. "At first, we had trouble persuading people to believe that it was important," Dante says. "Staff viewed our 5S idea as 'over-the-top,' and the general opinion was that people knew where everything was."

Shifting the staff's cynical outlook was crucial for their 5S plan to be successful. "Talking about how much things cost doesn't really motivate people; after all, it's not their money, it's the organization's." OMC needed a better tactic to get buy-in.

They landed on safety—brighter, clutter-free work areas, and a smarter workflow meant fewer hazards and less risk of injury on the job. Positioning 5S as a safety initiative helped gain much-needed employee support.

The workers themselves carried out the 5S improvements. To keep kick-off as painless as possible, Dante provided pre-roll out training and purchased the supplies needed—plenty of whiteboards, label makers, marking tape, and paint.

"We knew the staff would have to figure out how to get their 5S roles done while still doing their day-to-day jobs," says Dante. "We advised them to plan about one week apiece for sorting, setting in order, and shining." Dante and the management team gave employees ownership of their workspaces, providing oversight but resisting the urge to micromanage.

As a word of caution, Dante advises, "5S can be taken to extremes. Just make sure that what you're doing adds value." The goal of 5S is creating a safe and efficient workspace, which takes good judgment when it comes to effort vs. payoff. "When there is no sign or label in a work area, it may simply not be needed."



### The Result

OMC had a slow start with 5S, but once the work began, support got stronger. Dante saw that it wasn't just safety motivating employees—it was morale. Sorting, straightening, shining, and standardizing made a difference. People started to take pride in their clean, well-lit, spacious workstations.

On the business side, having a clean, organized factory floor improved production start-up time at OMC. Start-up used to take anywhere from five seconds to an hour—5S improvements reduced it to an average of just 10 seconds.

Despite these excellent results, Dante found that sustaining 5S after the initial kick-off was a struggle—especially getting specific, measurable participation. To follow through on the "sustain" part of 5S, OMC created a structured rewards and recognition program for employees who contribute to 5S throughout the year. To date, this plan includes an astonishing 12% of OMC's staff.



*"Cleaning up the bits and pieces around the shop sucked, but man o man, now you can find stuff without breaking a sweat. Just cleaning an area up or reorganizing the toolboxes are little things that helped in the end."*

~Terry, OMC injection molding technician



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