

# UTILIZING THE 5Ss

“CLEANLINESS AND ORDER ARE NOT MATTERS OF INSTINCT; THEY ARE MATTERS OF EDUCATING, AND LIKE MOST GREAT THINGS, YOU MUST CULTIVATE A TASTE FOR THEM.”

**Benjamin Disraeli**  
*British politician (1804-1881)*



PART 1

## Complete Commitment of All Five Pillars

By Preston Ingalls

**D**oes it seem to take you a while to find some things? Do you hear yourself muttering, “I know it’s here somewhere?” Do you find yourself burrowing through stacks of items to find one? Why do we repeat this?

The answer is simple—we have never realized the real value in “a designated place for every item.” In fact, we may actually find it humorous when we see a particularly organized person with a neat and pristine workplace or home and discount them as being anal retentive or obsessive compulsive. Perhaps we discount it with a statement like, “Well, someone has way too much time on their hands.” Actually, bringing order to a workplace or home has many benefits.

The 5Ss originate from a Japanese focus on organizing and bringing orderliness to the workplace. It represents the five pillars of the visual workplace (a way of bringing more orderliness and organization into the workplace through a structured approach). Each pillar’s name in the system originally was a Japanese word that started with “S.” We have converted it to begin with an English “S” word.

Countless Japanese and American organizations use the 5S system, because it aids in the creation and lifespan of a healthy, stable, efficient, and organized work environment. Without the 5S program in practice, or with only a few of the concepts in working order, an organization can become inefficient, chaotic, and extremely disorganized. In short, ALL of the elements of the 5S system need to be in effect for the process to work. The 5S system can be applied to your office, home, vehicle, or workplace environment ... and work equally as well in each.

### A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT

The 5Ss contribute to a safe and healthy work environment. They are the fundamentals which support standard operations, visual controls, workplace efficiencies, as well as other concepts. The 5Ss can also give an idea of the organization’s health.

Organizations that have difficulties implementing the system have chaotic, sometimes unsafe, and inefficient workplaces. Employees waste an inordinate amount of time searching and retrieving items.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# UTILIZING THE 5Ss

**PART 2**

“CLEANING ANYTHING INVOLVES MAKING SOMETHING ELSE DIRTY, BUT ANYTHING CAN GET DIRTY WITHOUT SOMETHING ELSE GETTING CLEAN.”

Laurence J. Peter (1919 - 1988)

By Preston Ingalls



Once implemented, the 5S system takes a space from cluttered to clean, creating a work environment for increased productivity.

There are many benefits that your organization can reap from implementing the 5S program. The 5Ss originate from a Japanese focus on organizing and bringing orderliness to a space, representing the five pillars of the visual workplace: sort, set in order, shine, standardize, and sustain. The 5S system is the building block for orderliness, organization, and cleanliness in an organization. Therefore, it will become the foundation for defect reduction, improving costs, and safety improvements. Productivity will increase, there will be fewer

defects, and operations will be more efficient and effective. Any organization can benefit from focusing on organizing their workplace. The 5S system is a good starting point for all improvement efforts aiming to drive out waste. Below are some specific benefits to conducting a 5S program:

**ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS**

- Lower costs due to less waste
- Greater confidence due to no complaints
- Better equipment availability due to no breakdowns

- Reliable deliveries due to no delays
- Safer work environment
- Less requirements for space

**INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS**

- Cleaner, more organized workplace improves morale
- Frustrations and obstacles disappear
- Communication improvement
- Easier to locate items
- More pleasant work environment
- Workplace safety improvement
- Job is more satisfying

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There may be some initial opposition to the 5S efforts because implementation of the process means making a lot of organizational changes. As we all know, change can be difficult to introduce and sustain. Below are some resistance statements you might hear with regards to 5S implementation.

- "Is this management's way of cutting pay by lessening overtime?"
- "I don't get paid to clean."
- "Everything has been working fine so far...why do we need to change now?"

If an organization fails at 5S implementation, it might be that the process seems so simple that people don't take it seriously. Then again, many organizations are able to accomplish great things with 5Ss. You cannot set up a 5S system if you don't understand the principles, know how to carry out the process, or have the discipline to practice the approaches.

#### IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGE EFFORTS

It takes a whole team of people to manage an organization-wide change effort. Organizing a Steering Council, such as one used for a TPR or TPM implementation effort, is best practice. A facilitator, various managers, and other crucial stakeholders should make up this group. Most organizations choose a facilitator who is the champion of the change effort. This person might lead the project long-term, or head up a short-term effort. Whichever time frame is chosen, the facilitator's job is to push the activities through the organization and head up the efforts. This person's activities might include:

- Recruiting team members
- Being the main contact point between the team and leadership
- Breaking the area into a manageable scope of activity for a week's effort
- Providing 5S training
- Maintaining team focus on 5S
- Examine material and workflow to minimize waste
- Brainstorming improvements
- Producing a day-by-day project plan of attack

The organization of the team depends on the organization's goals.

Most teams are cross-functional. A lot of times 5S implementation is the first step in a major organizational improvement effort. Sometimes though, an organization will organize a cross-functional team from the work area. It is imperative to choose people who understand the benefits and value of creating a visual workplace

and who are willing to make a contribution.

The key to successful 5S activities is auditing after the event and rewards and recognition for those sustaining the efforts. Although this looks like a common sense approach ... remember, common sense is not common practice. ■

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