

# VISUAL MANAGEMENT

Phuong Nguyen, Lean Implementation Manager, and Jim Mullen, CTX Lean Implementation Manager, Nosco, Inc.

There is so much more than meets the eye when it comes to what visual management has to offer to anyone in charge of managing a process. Time is a precious commodity in today's competitive world. The instant information world we live in and the ongoing pricing pressure we feel demand that we must be on top of our game. The opportunity to make timely decisions is vital in order to be successful.

Visual management provides a quick method of evaluating the status of any process. The knowledge gained can prompt action from management to get involved with those who use the process and work to improve it. Knowing the status allows management to affect the outcome by eliminating bottlenecks through employee engagement. Without visual management, problems will repeat, issues will be dealt with based on after-the-fact reports, and front-line leads must dig for information only if they know things are amiss.

## An Augmented Reality View of Your Operations

Why use visual management? If you are a football fan, then you can relate to what this would be like. Presently when you watch a game on TV, regardless of when you turn it on, you will see the score, the quarter, the time left on the clock, down and distance, timeouts remaining, and many times the play clock. This gives the viewer an instant evaluation of how the game is going. Without this, you would have to ask others for information, or if no else was available, then you just wouldn't know until you were told. Coaches have to have this information to be able to affect the outcome of the game. It would be a shame if the coach said, "If only I would've known the situation, I could have handled it differently."

That is sometimes what present-day management is without visual management. We have to know the status of a process at a glance in order to evaluate and take action if necessary. In the football world, there are actions taken by coaches to try to affect the outcome. Hurry up offense, no huddles, running out of bounds, spiking the ball, calling timeouts—these are all things coaches will do when they are behind. The fact is they know they are behind and are now taking steps beyond business as usual to try to tip the scales back in their favor.

## On the Pressroom Floor

Here is an example of using visual management to help manage a process. We were having a problem with staging orders for the presses in an organized fashion. Our preproduction team was overproducing for

some presses while causing delays for others. It was frustrating for multiple departments. A cross-functional team met on how to improve the process of staging orders for the presses. The team created makeready carts with a preflight checklist. The checklist became the visual to communicate if a cart was ready. Areas were taped off and labeled around each press to create a place for the completed staged carts to reside until needed. This made it easy for the press operator and the leads to see if the next order was staged and ready.

The improvements to the process resulted in a reduction of downtime that had been occurring when staged orders weren't ready. Now, all participating departments have a visual management method of managing the process of staging orders, as do the front line leads. With multiple eyes on the process, the best chance for success exists.

To help sustain this process, we are using a visual management tool for the front-line leads and managers—the *Kamishibai* audit board uses a red/green card system along with standardized questions to ask various team members how the process is working. Red means the audit was not done. If the card is green, this means the audit was completed. Any corrective actions are written on the green side.

## Getting Started

To start using visual management, we recommend implementing the 5S system. Most companies start their Lean journey by using the 5S system. 5S stands for the five steps used in the process: Sort, Set-in-order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain. The visual tools used include signage, labeling, location markers, color coding, standard work visuals, metric boards, and andon lights. With these visuals, a Lean enterprise plant looks distinctively different from mass production plants. The plant is clean, and visuals are everywhere with the goal of helping to manage the processes.

Phuong can be reached at [PNguyen@nosco.com](mailto:PNguyen@nosco.com) and Jim can be reached at [JMullen@nosco.com](mailto:JMullen@nosco.com).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Phuong Nguyen and Jim Mullen have prepared six presentation slides further demonstrating visual management.



Visual Management Examples  
(PDF Download)  
<http://prnt.in/ZzH>