

'STANDARDISED WORK' FROM THE SOURCE

As with 'Chinese whispers', the message changes over time ...

After spending three days with Mr Isao Kato, Mr Taiichi Ohno's HR advisor, in Japan at the end of October it became clear that common understanding of standardised work has developed many shades of grey. When provided with Mr Kato's '5 step ups' model we realised most of us are at step up 1 or 2. That was daunting and the bad news. The good news is a tremendous amount of value can be gained from just undertaking step up 1 and 2 at least.



It's important to first establish base terminology for three things: Standardised Work, Work Standards and Standardisation.

In the phrase 'standardised work' (the goal) the word standardised is an adjective; it describes the work. Here 'standardised' consists of three elements:

1. At takt – rate of production equals demand from the customer.
2. Work sequenced precisely (such that operations are completed within takt time).
3. Standard inventory (WIP) sufficient for the process to keep operating smoothly.

Resting immediately above the work itself are the work standards. These clearly communicate what the required standard is – what is 'normal'. Take action against abnormal is thus given life.

Essentially there are three types of work standards.

1. Those relating to the output, the product or service being provided.
2. Those relating to the machine(s)/ equipment that produce the output.
3. Those relating to the human that produces the output or runs the machine and/or uses the equipment that produces the output.

Mr Kato hammers the point "Before you can begin with standardised work, you must clarify your work standards."

Lastly there is the term 'standardisation'. Standardisation is a verb – it is the things we do to build adherence – moving from the work standards, toward standardised work. It is here that there will be a pull for many of the tools we hear about and see such as:

- An effective training system.
- Effective leadership (as some people are inclined not to follow standards!)
- A way of removing 'normal' impediments to flow (e.g. 5S).

By the way, building adherence through effective use of these tools and others reduces waste in the system.



Mr Kato outlined five step ups of standardised work. What follows is a very high-level view of this model.

Work standards are at step up 1. Where applicable they are to include a time component – the standard time to do each element of the work (by the machine and/or the person).

Step up 2 is where balancing the work to takt begins along with work sequencing and WIP for Just In Time. Charts and tools are used to illustrate. There is heavy emphasis on training to the standard along with means by which 'abnormal' can be quickly identified.

Step up 3 requires a rapid means of addressing abnormal to be in place, along with reoccurrence prevention. The focus now comes on standardising incidental tasks and levelling the distribution of work considering volume and workload changes.

Step up 4 is now getting to the fine points of standardised work – pursuing very low cycle up and changeover times, multiskilling people and driving genuine continuous improvement.

Finally, step up 5 will see a rigorous system of checks and balances in place for ensuring the effectiveness of rapid response and continuous improvement.

And now ... take a breath. As Mr Kato told us, not every organisation can and needs to get to step up 5. But substantial benefit will be gained by adopting the philosophies of standardised work to take you as far forward as is needed.