

Sustain

Overview of Module



Formally defined, in the context of 5S, sustain means to have the commitment and self-discipline to maintain the previous four steps.

In the 5S overview module we introduced the concept of a rope to describe sustain since when you tug on a rope with no slack in it you get an immediate response. Let's explore this more deeply.

It's sort of like this... if a company is serious about the sustain step there would be no way an employee of the company could ever walk by a piece of trash on the floor without picking it up since, staying with the analogy, the sustain rope has been pulled tight and any abnormality, like some trash on the ground, is immediately noticed.

However, when the rope isn't tight, meaning this last step of sustain is more of a facade than a way of life... that piece of trash may lay on the floor all day before someone even notices it.

Why Sustain?

1. The first reason the sustain step is so important is it drives accountability throughout the organization. You see, most people are far more likely to follow through with a promise when they know someone else is watching and participating in the same initiative.
2. Next, in addition to accountability, a little friendly competition can result from the sustain step. Later in the module we'll explain some techniques many companies use to keep everyone focused on not only maintaining, but also improving 5S levels. Of course this competition must be kept in check and not taken too far since, in the end, the success of the company is more important than the success of a particular work area.

3. Finally, perhaps the most important aspect of the sustain step is the fact that the entire organization continuously learns and improves. In fact, if we look at the PDCA wheel, which as an aside, will be covered in much more detail in a future course, we see parallels to 5S. The first three steps of sort, straighten, and sweep are covered in plan and do while the last two steps of standardize and sustain are covered in the check and act portions of PDCA.

Techniques to Sustain

1. The first technique to make clear links between 5S and SQDC metrics, which stand for safety, quality, delivery, and costs. Various graphs and charts linking 5S to other critical metrics should be in place.
2. The second technique to sustain is for supervision and management to practice genchi genbutsu which means to go and see for yourself. In fact, for 5S to sustain... management MUST make it a point to walk the floor at least once a day to find out what problems exist and how they can support their employees.
3. Another powerful technique is to implement what some call a 5 minute clean program where each and every employee cleans and tidies up for a designated period of time. Some find 5 minutes each day to be enough while some may need more and some need less. The exact time period is not as important as making sure cleaning and workplace organization becomes engrained in the daily work of all associates and not just something that happens during the annual spring cleaning blitz.
4. Next, having employees audit one another's work area at least once a month is another excellent technique used by many companies. Of course clear guidelines and specifications as to how to score things must be made clear to avoid potential conflict. Another benefit of this technique is that employees learn from each other and are able to share best practices while offering advice to one another.
5. Many companies also find that a friendly 5S competition between work areas, including front office areas, can be a great way to generate excitement around the 5S program.
6. Finally, the last technique we'd like to propose is to aim for your entire facility to be tour ready with no notice. In other words, if the CEO of your company called and said he or she would be in the plant in 5 minutes would you be ready for them? Another more practical way of ensuring you're tour ready is to invite others, including key customers, to tour your plant... you could also schedule family tours from time to time as these events force us to constantly stay on top of sorting, straightening, and sweeping.

Key Terms

- Sustain: To have the commitment and self-discipline to maintain the previous four steps.