

Implementation of 5s in HRM |

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ABSTRACT

Everything changes, and changes constantly: technologies, competitors, customers, suppliers, employees, the economy, the overall business environment—everything. To stay competitive, a company has to respond. And since an organization is a living, interconnected, and integrated system, an action taken in one place influences things elsewhere. A good 5S training program sensitizes people to all kinds of ways they can become more productive. The five S's are seiri (putting things in order); seiton (arranging things efficiently), seiso (preventing problems by keeping things clean); seiketsu (doing after-work maintenance and cleanup), and shitsuke (showing discipline, following the rules). Anytime it takes people more than a few seconds to find something, they will ask themselves why. A Five S program is usually a part of, and the key component of establishing a Visual Workplace, and are both a part of Kaizen — a system of continual improvement. This paper discusses the implementation of 5S concept in Human resource management.

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Introduction

It is the dream of every organization to have a continually improving quality of workforce. If the above is idealistic then at any instance the organization will have an updated workforce. The consequence of such a continually improved workforce ensures that the organization will have an employee asset of a constant value. This ensures that the organization will have a steady throughput throughout. This ensures that the organization will definitely meet with the continuously changing customer demands. The workforce represents the brain of the organization. Evidently a steady and disciplined mind will lead to a deterministic and profitable organization. Human Resource Management has always had its glory of being one of the most important aspects of management. The true reflection of the capability of an organization relies on sustenance of profit margins. Often the sole reason why this sustenance does not exist is because of stale or non-adaptive workforce. The employees of an organization fail to change while the customer requirements and the market expectation changes rapidly. Many case studies in the past have shown that a stubborn nature in employees will cause a drastic effect on the profit margin of an organization. A survey on the employees of the famous American motor corporation, the GMC, by Polaris Market Research [2008] has revealed that the adamant nature of the organization has led to its downfall. GMC

adamantly refused to make a compromise on the power of the engines in the SUV segments to gain more fuel efficiency. The guzzlers produced by GMC failed to suit the market conditions. When we cite GMC we are citing an organization which offers so many staff benefits that on an average a GMC customer is charged over 1000\$ per vehicle for the ex-employee's pension and medical schemes. There are many third generation GMC workers but no new idea workers. Thus the continual improvement of the workforce of an organization is extremely important.

Why 5 S?

Any management reference guide and any internet material on 5s simply call it a thumb rule saying "Everything in its place and a place for everything". It has become a cliché. We are unintentionally repeating an axiom of 5s and forgetting the main essence of it by following this so called definition. The true essence of 5s is to bring a continually improving scheme. This not only ensures the sustenance of existing resources but also ensures that the existing resources are continually updated and maintained. To give us a clear picture of what is 5s we will have to understand the 5s at first.

Seiri: Put things in order.

Arrange, sort. Keep only the essential items – Discard the unessential ones.

Seiton: Proper arrangement.

Set in order. There should be a place for everything and everything should be in their place. They should be reached easily when needed.

Seiso: Clean.

Keep things clean and polished so that you would love to work with them. This cleaning should be a part of daily work – not after things get messed up!

Seiketsu: Purity and Standardization.

Operate in consistent fashion to yield consistent results.

Shitsuke: Sustaining the discipline.

Maintaining and reviewing standards. Once the previous 4S have been established, they become a new way to operate. But if there is a suggested improvement or a new tool, then a review of the 4S is appropriate.

The application of such a concept in HRM would seem a hard combination but once we get the clear picture on how to apply the 5s individually, it will be blending well. It is expected that the importance and the need of a continually changing workforce is well understood. 5s becomes a good choice owing to its continuously improving nature.

How to apply Seiri (Sort)

Most of the organizations perform this step correctly. This step involves the sorting, categorization and the hierarchical arrangement of the employees. When we speak of categorization we do not mean the distribution of the employees under a specific task. We refer to a more general categorization. The level of abstraction is higher here. Categorization into departments may be a good example. Often many organizations fail to give a vivid hierarchy for the feel good sake of the employees. A study by Adam Schuler on Pizza Hut [2003], showed that the absence of a hierarchy in employees created a better team work mentality. Pizza Hut gives equal importance to all its employees working in a particular franchise. All the employees are trained to do all the general activities (none of them are skilled of course). The distinguishing takes place by means of badges, which are of relevance only during pay days. Even if we adapt this modern mentality concept in our organization, it is advisable to have a hierarchy formed and hidden from the employees. The hierarchy is not to discriminate employees but to get a clear picture about the role of every individual in an organization.

How to apply Seiton (Set in order i.e. everyone in her post and a post for every work)

This is the most famous axiom of 5s. This is one place where organizations may fail. The National Sample Survey of India [1999] says that 23% of underemployment has occurred in India in terms of man-days. The same survey shows 8% of overemployment. It is evident that 31% of people in India are not in their place. After the Voluntary Retirement Service was introduced in public sector banks in the year 2001, many branches with a customer demand of n employees are now working with a $0.6*n$ employees[#]. This indicates that there is an overemployment by 40%. A study in a particular branch also showed that lack of labour forced the employees to take turns every week to perform a few clerical tasks. These are clear indicators to bad managerial decisions in organizations. If the 5s concept has to be successful, it is recommended that the employers understand the importance of having every person in his post and a post for every work. The employees are found to work with a lot of passion if they are employed in the right post for their skill set. This also ensures that the organization is utilizing its man power with the maximum efficiency. Although the ideal case is that the employer employees the right person for a job, compromises are made based on the salary and lack of skilled labour. It is inevitable not to have a trade off in such circumstances. However it is better to wait initially till we get the right ring than to suffer later wearing a tight one. Once the right choice has

been made and a proper organization is established, our concerns move towards maintain the established manpower.

based on a personal survey in a PSB(Canara Bank).

How to apply Seiso (Shine)

As mentioned before, the real ability of an organization is in its profit sustenance. To sustain, the organization should adapt. To adapt, the organization must constantly change their employees. It does not refer to continually laying off and employing a new workforce. It refers to continually updating the workforce to meet new market conditions, technologies, and requirements. Software organizations are excellent examples to an idealistic model for the Seiso. They keep their employees updated with the state of the art technology at any instance. There are many papers published on various methodologies to be followed to update the workforce. Although our concern here is to interpret it the 5s way, we give a few effective ways to achieve this update.

They are:

❖ Enhancement Vacations

This refers to sending the employees on a paid vacation to an educational institution to gain any

required knowledge in a structure education format.

❖ **Refresher Courses**

This refers to a smaller level of the enhancement vacation. This is attributed to workshops and certificate courses. This may also be after work hours on a regular working day.

❖ **Market Scouting / Market Study**

This is more for the marketing personnel. This gives them an opportunity to study the market in detail and adapt themselves to the changes in customer mentality and market behaviour. They can in turn conduct a refresher course for the R&D personnel to adapt to the new customer requirements. This may also give the organization an idea about viable markets.

How to apply Seiketsu (Standardize)

Here we refer to quantitative monitoring of the employees labour. This will ensure that each employee is monitored and assessed quantitatively by an individual group in the organization. It is important that this assessment is done in an unbiased fashion. As Seiton defines, an exclusive team should be established to perform this operation. This results in a clear cut indication of

the Return on Investment of each employee. The ROI can then be used to standardize the performance index of each employee. This gives us a bottom up approach to sustain the performance of the organization. ARM the British processor core manufacturer (which is a software company) has actually managed to achieve 6 sigma standards in performance index (3 DPPMP). They do not have a million employees (700) which imply that 100% of their employees are falling within the performance index given by the standards of performance index of employees in the capability maturity model. Standardize quantitatively to Sustain.

How to apply Shitsuke (Sustain)

Shitsuke stands for sustain but to sustain the only way out is to improvise. Use the existing system to improvise. 5s is an incremental process. In a single iteration there will be little change in the organization. The refinement of the first iteration having the existing system as a benchmark will bring in more changes. This implies that the above 4s are iterated till the finest level of refinement is achieved. Which will never happen as change occurs always in various levels of the organization. Thus we can ensure a trustworthy management technique which can be followed for eternity.

Conclusion

5s is required to be followed in HRM for the organization to reach the pinnacle of glory at the same time care should be taken so as not to impose it very rigidly on the employees. We are talking about an organization of professionals and not battalion of soldiers. Flexibility and freedom are the virtues that bring peace in a work atmosphere. Employers and managers must understand that and learn the art of deploying 5s in a more fun to

do way so as to achieve the ultimate goal; Continual Improvement.

References

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