



5S in the Workplace

Purpose of this guide:

This basic guidance will introduce the concept of 5S in the office workplace and provide tips and resources for how to use this tool to create workplace organization, eliminate waste and establish a culture of continuous quality improvement. This introductory information is to be used in conjunction with the [LeanOhio 5S Guide](#).

What is 5S?



5S is the name of a workplace organization method that uses a list of five Japanese words/phases: *seiri* (*sort*), *seiton* (*set in order*), *seiso* (*shine*), *seiketsu* (*standardize*), and *shitsuke* (*sustain/systematize*). This technique describes how to organize a work space for efficiency and effectiveness by identifying and storing the items used, maintaining the area and items, and sustaining the new order.

5S is more than just a Lean tool or methodology, it is a culture that should be built into any organization that aims for continuous improvement of a working environment and involves staff at all levels.

What's in it for me (benefits of 5S)?

When fully implemented, the 5S process increases morale, creates positive impressions on customers, and increases efficiency and organization. Not only will employees feel better about where they work, the effect of continuous improvement can lead to less waste, better quality and faster lead times. 5S is not only a system for housekeeping, it is an integrated approach for productivity improvement. 5S in whole is a culture which increases production, improves quality, reduces cost, makes delivery on time, improves safety and improves morale. 5S is not a list of action items, but is an integrated concept of actions, condition and culture. To get the greatest success, the nature and implication of each "S" needs to be understood by each employee and should be regularly practiced.

To what can 5S be applied?

- Individual workspace
- Shared workspace
- Individual electronic files
- Shared drives/files
- Home/personal space

Tips to prepare for a program/division 5S project/campaign:

- **Convene a planning team.** A team approach can help a 5S event be successful. In this case, 2+ heads are better than one to help operationalize the initiative.
- **Get Leadership support.** It's important that leadership is aware of the project and is not only supportive of the initiative, but participates too (if possible).
- **Communicate.** Send out a few communications prior to the event to give staff a heads up about what 5S is and why it's important.
- **Schedule time.** Schedule a full day event once or twice per year to allow staff to allot this time and not feel torn about other work they feel they should be focusing on. This set aside time is appreciated and will increase participation. Idea/Tip: You can schedule the morning to work on individual workspace/electronic files and the afternoon can be designated for shared areas/workspace.
- **Make it fun!** If being conducted within a program/division, make it fun by incentivizing through friendly contests (Ex: number of active team participants, best before and after pictures, most items removed from workspace, best sculpture of "junk" removed from workspace, most freed up space within a folder/drive, etc.)

- **Provide food/snacks.** Who doesn't like free food as an incentive? Staff will appreciate this gesture.
- **Provide cleaning supplies and trash/recycle bins.** For larger divisions, it is often times suggested that Building Operations is notified and/or contacted to provide extra bins and help dispose of unneeded items. ALWAYS allow building operations to surplus any unwanted furniture and contact the OIT help desk if extra PC equipment is not needed.
- **Show visual proof of progress.** Take [before and after pictures](#) of physical workspace. A picture says a thousand words. The *after* picture can be used as a visual diagram/standard as to what the workspace should continue to look like in the weeks to come. Post a visual picture in shared workspaces to know at a glance if something is awry.
- **Use 5S checklists** to guide staff through the process. (Within [LeanOhio 5S Guide](#))
- **Create a Red Tag area.** Create a location where staff can place unwanted materials, supplies and equipment. This allows others to see what's up for grabs and perhaps not need to order new supplies. For any items remaining, either store for 30 days or throw away/recycle/surplus/donate.
- **Ensure appropriate records retention policy is followed.** It's important to provide staff with information about your organization's records retention policy to ensure adherence.

What about electronic *shared* drives?

The basic 5S tool can be applied, although it is recommended that shared drives are treated as a separate larger project with the appropriate individuals in the room.

Preparation might include:

- Determining folder structure
- Developing a standard naming convention for files
- Establishing how many drafts/final documents to keep at any given time
- Researching and adhering to current record retention policies
- **Tip to get started:** Create separate "Yes", "No" and "Maybe" folders and keep the process flowing by placing items into the "Maybe" folder when the group cannot agree or you're unsure. Then go back to the "Maybe" folder at the end and do the exercise again. This can also be used for 5sing a person's individual drive/electronic files.

Ready to 5S?

Follow the instructions in this guide to get started: [LeanOhio 5S Guide](#)

Have Questions?

For questions or more information, please contact:

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5S image for use in communicating:

