

Ken Van Winkle, TBM Director of U.S. Consulting and Team Leader



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Management visibility and engagement, though sometimes overlooked, is probably the most critical element of a site's lean journey. The imperative is that management must not just tell employees what they should be doing on the journey toward becoming lean, but they need to be actively engaged in the process as well. "Seeing is believing"—the best motivator for any associate is to see members of management actively engaged in the process of the lean journey. This is especially true when it comes to maintaining momentum and sustaining gains. If management is committed to change, then the rest of the workforce will more easily follow.

A great starting point for being actively engaged is what is often called the "weekly management walk," or perhaps it could be the daily management walk. Either way, this is an opportunity for the management team to walk the talk—it can help them to both understand what is going on in key areas where kaizen activity has started and also help to resolve problems. Just getting out on the shop floor and reviewing the activities there on a regular basis can be a good learning experience for the management team as well as a morale booster for the plant associates.

Management walks are an integral part of any management for daily improvement (MDI) plan. MDI plans are the means by which an organization ensures that lean activities don't become a "yeah, we already did that" phenomenon, but instead remain the focus of an ongoing transformation and cultural change whose ultimate goal is to allow the organization to grow profitably. After all, a lean transformation is about continuous improvement, but since it's human nature to become a bit complacent once some success has been achieved, it's up to management to actively fight that complacency and foster a true lean cultural transformation.

The management walk is typically done at a pre-set time each day or week. The site manager (plant manager) leads the walk and is accompanied by key members of the management team. The site manager leading the weekly (or daily) management walk sends the appropriate message to all employees as to who is the champion of the LeanSigma® transformation. The walk itself has several goals:

- To insure support by the management team of kaizen sustainment.
- To understand the safety, quality, cost, delivery (SQCD)/5S performance trends.
- To help areas or departments celebrate their successes.
- To ensure that the management team is up-to-date on any recurring problems in a particular department and lends support toward resolving those problems.
- To conduct an SQCD board audit in the interest of continuous improvement.



The management walk is not intended to be a time to resolve issues (although it is certainly a time for management to be made aware of issues). It is primarily a time for one-way communication from the SQCD board owner of a particular department or area to the management team. All in attendance should be attentive and show respect to the supervisor/team leader who runs the department. The management walk should be brief, approximately five minutes per board visited. The idea is not to spend a lot of time dissecting the metrics presented but rather to obtain an overview of the situation in a particular area and be made aware of any issues that have arisen with meeting those metrics. During the walk, one of the management team members should

conduct an audit of the SQCD board using the “SQCD Board Audit Form.” The form should be left at the board with the expectation that issues identified will be addressed during the coming week.

Regular, planned management walks can produce a number of benefits:

- They promote managing by performance.
- They ensure that the management team clearly understands the performance trends at the key departments where boards are being used.
- They ensure that the supervisor/team leader of the area is actively engaged in abnormality management, that is, in solving problems that are reflected on the SQCD board (e.g., missing performance targets).
- They show the management team’s support of the LeanSigma transformation to all on the shop floor or in the office area.

For a management walk to be successful in helping to sustain a plant’s lean journey, several logistical items must be considered:

- Clearly define the day and time of the week for the management walk.
- Clearly define who is expected to attend.
- Clearly define which SQCD board(s) will be visited during the walk.
- Assign a person on the management team to conduct the SQCD board audit.
- Clearly define the person that will speak to the SQCD board metrics.
- Have a pre-set agenda for the person discussing the SQCD board metrics; this agenda should include the following topics:
 - Key performance trends
 - Metrics indicating missed targets during the past week
 - Root cause identification for key targets missed
 - Countermeasure(s) that have been identified or implemented to resolve the problems



Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that you are too busy to take time out of your daily or weekly schedule for the management walk. The success of any organization’s lean journey depends on commitment and hands-on leadership from the management team. This simple and brief activity may well be the key to keeping your lean transformation fresh, active, and energized. ■

SQCD Board Audit Sheet

Area _____
 Auditor _____
 Date _____

| | Yes / No | Score 0/1 | Comments |
|---|---|--------------------------|----------|
| Safety | | | |
| Is the information current and upto date? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Is the target on the charts and correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are weekly coutermeasures identified? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Does the data indicate improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Quality | | | |
| Is the information current and upto date? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Is the target on the charts and correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are weekly coutermeasures identified? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Does the data indicate improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Delivery | | | |
| Is the information current and upto date? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Is the target on the charts and correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are weekly coutermeasures identified? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Does the data indicate improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Cost | | | |
| Is the information current and upto date? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Is the target on the charts and correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are weekly coutermeasures identified? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Does the data indicate improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 5's | | | |
| Is the information current and upto date? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Is the target on the charts and correct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are weekly coutermeasures identified? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Does the data indicate improvement? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Total Score | <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/> | | |

Note Max score = 20 Q1.08

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