

LEAN Management Glossary

The following are selected excerpts from a more comprehensive glossary issued by the State of Oregon Employment Department.

Continuous Improvement: A philosophy by which individuals within an organization look for new ways to always do things better. A pledge every day, to do or make something better than it was before. The improvement of products, processes and/or services on an ongoing basis. The gains made through continuous improvement activities are generally increasing small step improvements.

5-S: A procedure for removing all excess materials and tools from the workplace and organize the required items using Visual Controls that are easy to find, use and maintain. Creates an independent culture which maintains a neat, clean and efficient workplace.

Flow: Often referred to as “1 piece-flow” ideally one piece at a time. It rejects the concept of batch or lot production, and accomplishes the pull or demand processing.

Kanban: Means to “Put away and to bring out” or “signal.” It is a Japanese term of the “Just in Time Pull.” It often refers to a card or other physical device used to signal the previous operation that is authorized to produce the next unit.

Kaizen: The Japanese term for continuous improvement and “change for the better” through setting and working toward increasingly higher standards. Kaizen is a process of improvement used to quickly and routinely identify and eliminate waste from the workflow process to improve performance.

Quality at the Source: This is a practice where each person is accountable for quality every day with each product or service he/she is providing. When each person is accountable for assuring quality, they each become “the source,” and there is no need for an inspector to review the products/services down the line or upon completion of a product/service. If there’s a problem, a signal goes up and everyone can see it. No one can work/build until the problem is solved. The “Fix it Fast and Forever” approach puts the expectation on everyone involved, not just the supervisor, to fix the issue before restarting the work. This approach reduces error, waste, time and cost, and increases efficiency, ownership and quality.

Visual Controls: Using carefully designed graphical displays whose meaning can be understood at a glance and are therefore more likely to be effective at communicating the required message (i.e., universal symbols for stop, go, completed, do not enter).