



Using Visual Controls to Improve Communication between Management & Operators

It's not easy to be in charge. Usually there is not enough time to get your own work done, let alone trying to find time to get out to the shop floor. But one of CTPM's key learnings is that good Visual Controls makes that time you do get out on the floor focused and valuable for both you and the staff.

Workplace Dilemma

A common workplace statement in Australia is "G'day, how are things today?" Whilst sounding genuine it is often just another way of saying hello. Nothing seems worst than after asking that question, someone takes the opportunity to off load all their problems on you. But with good use of Visual Controls this shouldn't happen.

Solution

Visual Controls are part of what constitutes standardised work so you can see what's normal vs. abnormal and this is what makes things much easier to identify!



Through use of the Visual Controls (as seen in the figures below), operators should be able to know themselves how things are with instant feedback. They can either self correct or they should be receiving assistance from their Team Leader who can also see the deviation from normal practices.





This ability to capture issues early and have them resolved at the lowest possible level in the organisation is a great benefit. It also means that when Managers come to the line they can have their time best used only resolving those issues that are beyond that which the team cannot genuinely resolve themselves. Better still, when things are working well, Management have a greater chance to simply look with a perspective of assisting improvement.



How does your workplace match-up?

The test of how good you're Visual Control systems are is if an outsider can make an accurate assessment of how things are going.

CTPM has observed where once a month a non-operations based Manager, say from Marketing, walks with the Supervisor or Team Leader to complete the WAM / 5S compliance audit sheet. This has the dual benefit of having your Visual Controls tested to ensure that they are simple to assess, and secondly it certainly increases the understanding of the non-operational staff of the plants capabilities. We have also witnessed executives gaining confidence and having more meaningful dialogue with operators as the mystery of things is swept away.





Key Learning

Visual Controls are not just about having a place for everything and everything in its place. They should be **established by the people who will be using them**, and they should go to the full extent of being able to tell at a glance:

Work Area

- Is the workplace neat and orderly – a place for everything and everything in its place?
- Do we have enough raw materials or are we overstocked?
- Are we overproducing or under-producing our product as per our 'pull / kanban' system?

Equipment

- Are all key fasteners match-marked so any looseness can be picked up immediately?
- Do all our instruments have visual guides highlighting the expected operating range?
- Are all lubrication levels obvious and within working parameters?

People

- Are people wearing the required PPE for their area?
- Is the work being performed to the agreed standard which also incorporates employee safety?
- Do the people working in the area have sufficient skill to do their job according to the current Base Skills matrix?

Performance

- Was the production in the last hour to expectation? Is it ahead or behind for the shift?
- What is the level of quality problems received in the last hour and so far this shift?
- What is the level of quality problems generated in the last hour and so far this shift?

Developing Visual Controls should never stop. It is an on-going improvement activity. For example in production it commences with Work Area Management and continues throughout the 7 steps of Operator Equipment Management so that those who will be using the Visual Controls will have good ownership to them.

For more information about CTPM's learnings regarding the use of Visual Controls to Improve Communication between Management and Operators please do not hesitate to contact your CTPM Navigator or CTPM Head Office on +61 2 4226 6184 or email to ctpm@ctpm.org.au.