

The Visual Workplace



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Why is a Visual Workplace Important?

The need for communication in a factory is very strong

Traditional methods of communication are not adequate:

- Department Memoranda
- Reports
- Telephones
- Computer Terminals

Why?

- Channels are overloaded
- Information is misinterpreted
- The environment is saturated

The problem is how to communicate with people at close range, not long distance.

- What do you do here?
- What is the flow of the product?
- How well is the product flowing at this moment?
- Is production efficient or inefficient?
- What is the quality level of the various operations?
- What progress has been made to reduce inventory levels?
- To what degree is continuous improvement being practiced?

Where should the answers to these questions be found?

In the office area?

In the production area?

The environment at many plants is tedious because the reality of production is not **visible** at the point where production occurs.

“I’ll believe it when I see it.” “A picture is worth a thousand words.” “Now I see what you mean.”

Visual images send a more consistent message!

- Visual communication is predominant in organizations that seek to reinforce employee autonomy.
- The emphasis is on openness, expansion of contacts, and greater cohesion.
- Visual communication, above all, is a matter of company culture, a culture where the essence is sharing.
- Companies that promote a visual workplace typically practice other forms of workforce empowerment as well.
- A visual workplace *enables people to see.*

Visual Communication Takes Many Forms

The distinctive aspect of visual communication is that it is intended for a group. This helps people to pull in the same direction.

Visual Communication can be:

- a sign
- a label
- a photograph
- a display
- a trend chart
- a color scheme
- whatever serves the purpose

A visual message is observed by everyone working in a given area, everyone who passes through the area, and everyone who comes into range of visibility.

What Purpose is Being Served?

Visual Communication should be tailored to the audience

- If information is intended for cell operators, supervisors, technicians, or management, then they must be personally involved in the creation and maintenance of the visual communication.
- Each objective that is posted for a factory or work cell should have the effect of mobilizing the individuals responsible for achieving that objective.
- Every flag, flashing light, or caution statement must be linked to a corresponding set of actions and responsibilities.
- If no one is using a visual communication, it should be removed.

Information Empowers Workers

The Visual Workplace Promotes Autonomy and Productivity

Has the group defined a productivity objective?
This objective must be visible.

Are operators responsible for quality?
Quality must be visible.

Must precise work instructions be followed?
These work instructions must be visible.

Has the team developed an improvement strategy?
This strategy must be visible.

Is the customer satisfied or dissatisfied?
This satisfaction level must be visible.

What do the people in this area do? What are these tools for? Are any missing? What is this inventory? Are there any safety precautions in this area? What is the current status of this line?

Examples of Workplace Communication

The Team's Territory

- Boundaries of Territory
- Activities, Resources, and Products
- Identification of the team
- Markings on the floor
- Markings of tools and racks
- Information and instructions

Visual Production Control

- Takt Time
- Production Schedule
- Maintenance Schedule
- Inventories and WIP

Visual Quality Control

- Quality losses
- Statistical Process Control
- Cautions and Alerts
- Monitoring Signals for Machines

General Displays

- Objectives and Results
- Mission Statement
- Concept Posters
- Improvement Activities
- Current Projects

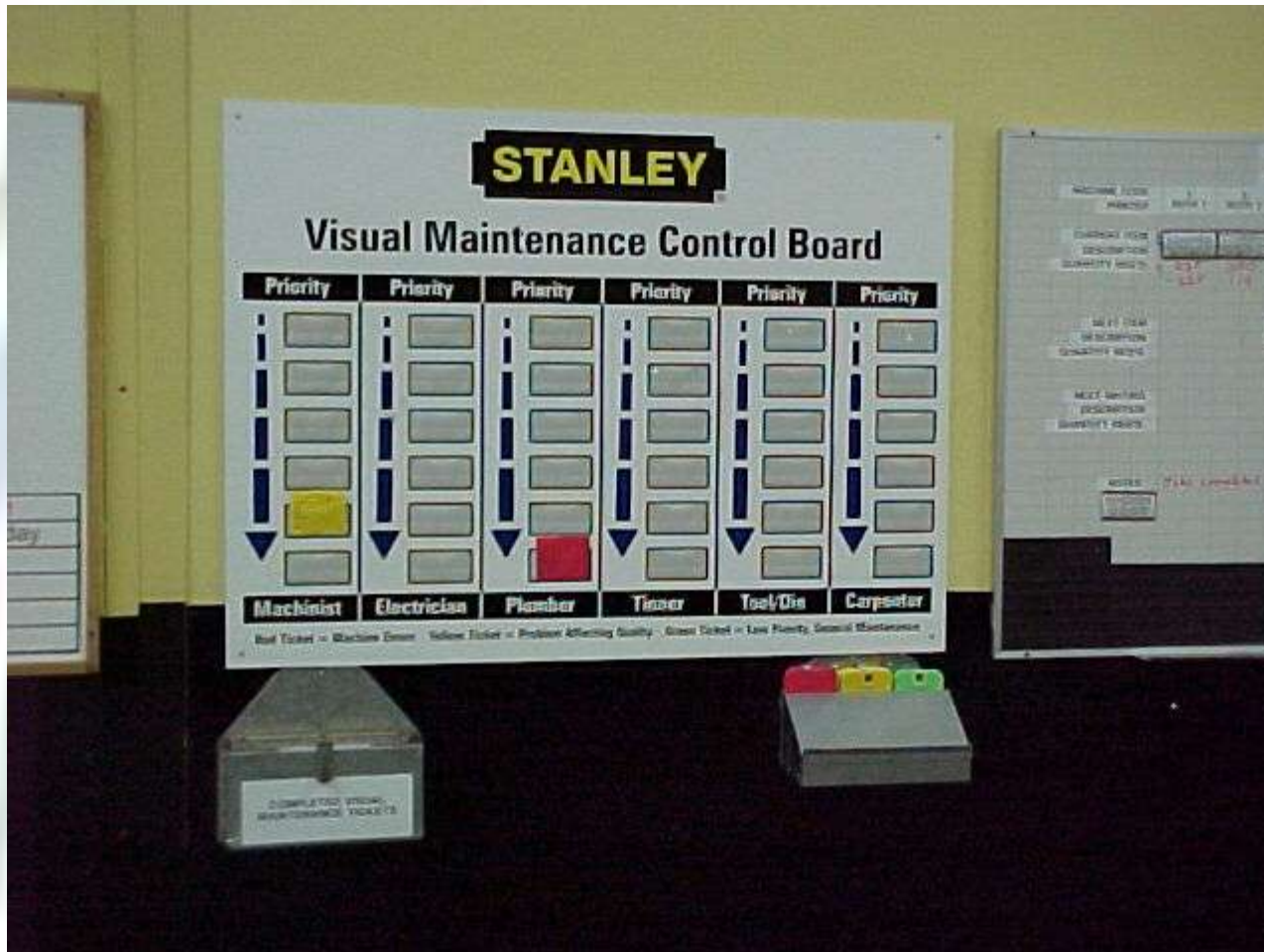
There is no reason to try to do everything on this chart or to limit yourself to what's on this chart. Be creative and use what works.

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Overhead Scoreboards show performance to daily production requirements.

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This maintenance control board is used for posting and prioritizing maintenance tasks.

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Kanban cards are an effective form of Visual Communication.

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Consumable tooling is clearly identified to prevent the waste associated with searching.

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If a fixture is not on the rack, it is in the machine!

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After a 5S Kaizen, it is now clear where things belong in the work cell.

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What are the odds that it is faster to locate tooling after this 5S Kaizen?

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Visual labeling of parts and tooling, shadow boards, and color coding.