



# GO TO THE WORK

## Introduction

Too often we think we understand all aspects of a project, but without physical observation, we can actually miss a lot. “Going to the Work” is not simply about quality control or ensuring that a project is on track—it helps us understand the intricacies of how the work gets done in order to identify waste and improve performance.

Going to the Work (called Going to the *Gemba* in original Toyota Production System language) is crucial to improving overall quality control and eliminating waste in the workflow process.

## 1.0 Why

Going to the Work (called Going to the *Gemba* in original Toyota Production System language) is crucial to improving overall quality control and eliminating waste in the workflow process. It helps participants identify ways to standardize processes and manage expectations from a first-hand perspective, rather than second or third

hand.

Other benefits include:

- Gathering valuable insights to inform kitting, batching and sequencing;
- Improving the planning process;
- Supporting mentoring, training and cross-training efforts;
- Improving safety;
- Clarifying the scope of the project, components or task;
- Empowering participants to understand the process (including cross trades) and suggest ways to improve it;
- Offering a venue to show respect for designers, technicians and craftsmen by asking for their input and offering ways to improve their environment or remove constraints; and,
- Realizing instant improvements to the process.

## 2.0 How

Experienced practitioners employ a variety of methods and tools to assist them in the Go to the Work process. One of the most well-known is the Ohno Circle, which involves observing a project for an established period of time to gain a full understanding of the entire process.

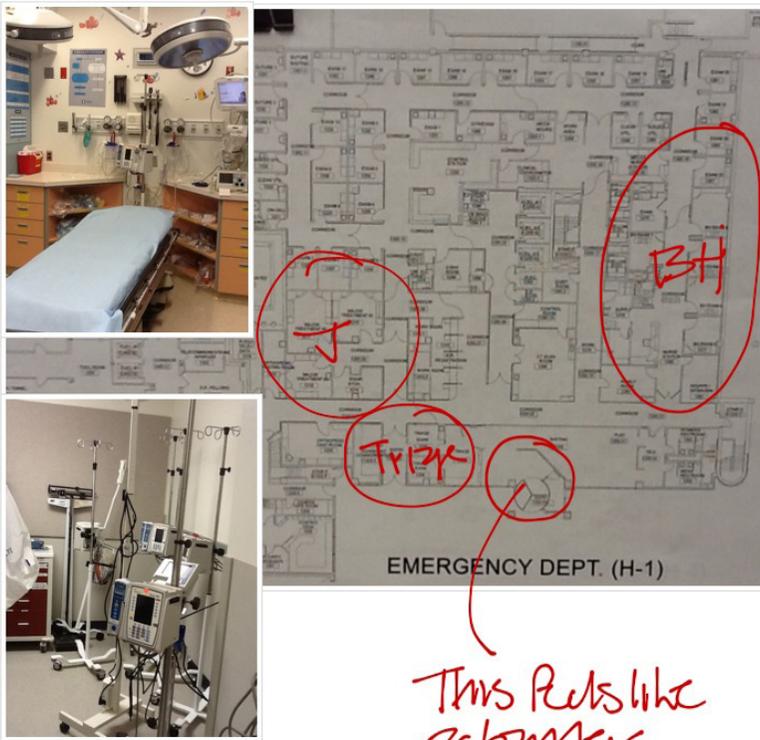
Additional methods and tools include:

- **Video Studies:** Used for processes that are too long or impractical to observe in real time. Instead, the process is taped and watched as a video. The videos can be used later as training aids for continuous improvement.
- **First-Run Study:** Often the first step employed by project leaders to gain a sense of work movements. The goal is to help standardize processes and mark a baseline for continuous improvement.
- **Skilled Craft Lunches:** Provides an intimate setting to search for issues and ideas from trades and other partners.
- **Spaghetti Diagrams:** Involves drawing a pencil sketch of the movement associated with a process. If overly complicated, then the process is likely

inefficient and can be improved.

- **RFID (Radio Frequency Identification):** A form of location-based tracking used to track the movements of materials, equipment or personnel.
- **Mockups:** Can help establish an end-product standard and prove its functionality for end-user stakeholders. Any investment in mockups should be in proportion to the benefits. In some cases, a virtual mockup may be sufficient. However, it is worth noting that virtual mockups will not always yield the practical

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The awareness gained from Going to the Work serves to educate the team on how work is performed at every stage of the process, and leads to productive change.

Shown: Notes from observations on processes in an Emergency Department.

insights provided by a physical mock up.

- **Prototyping:** The rapid development of a prototype used to prove or disprove ideas.

While observing the work, everyone should understand the goal of the activity, which is to make improvements in a collaborative and constructive manner. The purpose is not to be punitive (Respect for People), but should be based upon a genuine desire to work together for better outcomes.

### 3.0 What

Going to the Work refers to the act of observing a project’s moving parts, from administrative tasks to specific construction processes. It is directly related to the principle of “going slow to go fast” and Continual Reflection. The awareness gained from these observations serves to educate the team on how work is performed at every stage of the process, and leads to productive change. Information gathered can also be used with other tools, such as Value Stream Mapping, A3s, PDCA and Swarming.

Everyone involved in a project can benefit from Going to the Work, from owner representatives, project design leaders, project managers and leadership, to cross trades and less experienced practitioners.

### References

*Gemba Walks, Jim Womack*



**Quick Reference**

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