

LEADERSHIP LEARNING GUIDE / EPISODE 4

Management Made Him Walk 61 Miles! - A Leadership Lesson in Learning to See

Topic: Employee involvement, process flow, wasted motion and workplace safety Audience: Leadership, management, operations, Lean and organizational behavior courses

ABOUT THE EPISODE

Jose packed finished products for shipment, but the layout forced him to walk repeatedly for packing material, machine covers, skids and inspection. Before observing him, Pete explained that the process - not Jose - was being evaluated. A spaghetti diagram revealed 2,568 feet of walking per work order, about 61 miles per year and 21 hours of annual walking. Working with Jose, the team reorganized materials and moved needed resources closer. Walking fell to 521 feet per order, about 12.4 miles and 4.3 hours per year. The changes also removed a hazardous ladder climb and reduced unnecessary handling. Jose was taught the method so he could recognize similar problems and teach others.

Jose wasn't wasting time. We were wasting Jose's time.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching, students should be able to:

- Explain how a spaghetti diagram makes unnecessary movement visible.
- Describe why a leader should explain an observation's purpose before studying an employee's work.
- Connect layout improvements to productivity, safety and reduced product handling.
- Explain why teaching Jose the method creates more value than simply redesigning the area for him.

FOUR PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Start with trust. Tell the employee what is being studied and make clear the process - not the person - is being evaluated.
2. Follow the actual work. Trace every trip instead of assuming the layout is efficient.
3. Improve with the employee. People doing the work understand obstacles managers may never see.
4. Build capability. Teach employees to recognize and solve future problems so improvement spreads.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How might Jose have behaved differently if Pete had appeared with a stopwatch and no explanation?
2. What did the spaghetti diagram reveal that a production report might miss?
3. Why would blaming Jose for taking too long have misdiagnosed the problem?
4. Which changes improved safety as well as productivity?
5. Why is teaching Jose to use the method himself an important leadership outcome?

FIVE-MINUTE CLASSROOM ACTIVITY / MAP THE WALK

In pairs, sketch a simple packing area with a workbench, supplies, inspection and shipping. Draw the worker's path for one order. Mark trips that add no value and one potential safety risk. Redraw the layout to shorten travel, then explain how you would involve the worker in testing the proposed arrangement.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The strongest improvement made Jose's work more productive, meaningful and safe - and gave him the ability to help others improve their work too.

SEE THE WORK. INVOLVE THE PERSON. DEVELOP THE PERSON.

WATCH 61 MILES OF SPAGHETTI
https://youtu.be/dkbJhLIFW6I

Scan the code to watch on YouTube.



Explore the principles behind this case in
The Lean Leader's Playbook.
Explore how observing work and involving employees reveals waste and builds problem-solving skills.

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