



BRIDGE Academy Toolkit

Gemba Walk

Description: In Japanese, the word *Gemba* means, “the real place” or “where the work gets done.” A Gemba Walk is a tool used to visualize and understand a process – in the place and the time where it happens.

The following three concepts are important elements of a Gemba Walk:

- **Go and See** – The point of a Gemba Walk is for managers, leaders, or project teams to physically visit the place where the work is done and be involved in identifying opportunities for improvement.
- **Ask Why** – A Gemba Walk’s main objective is to explore the business process in detail and identify challenges through open communication. A good project leader actively listens to the participants in the process to identify issues and challenges.
- **Respect for People** – It can be disconcerting to suddenly see a group of people traipsing through your work area and asking probing questions. Keep in mind that the point of the Gemba Walk is not a “gotcha” but rather a “how can we work together to improve” type of activity.

How to Use this Tool:

1. Develop a plan for the Gemba Walk that addresses the following:
 - a. Who will be walking with you?
 - b. Why are you doing it?
 - c. What will you observe?
 - d. What challenges or issues will you focus on?
2. Coordinate the logistics for the Gemba Walk including:
 - a. When is it a good time to observe the process?
 - b. Pick an observation site (if the process takes place in more than one location).
 - c. Involve a representative from the operation.
3. Prepare a checklist with sample questions for participants.
4. After the Gemba Walk, reflect on your observations:
 - a. What did you learn?
 - b. What did you expect to see but did not?
 - c. What did you see that was unexpected?
 - d. What were the challenges you observed? Were these one-offs or systemic?
 - e. What are the highest priority issues that should be addressed?
- f. What are your next action steps for addressing these issues?

Sample Gemba Walk Questions

- Who are the customers of this process?
- What do the customers value?
- What are the steps in the process?
- When is the process complete?
- What are the biggest pain points in this process?
- What data is available to analyze this process?