



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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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?