

Using Standard Work Packages to Reduce Time to Train Staff and Improve Quality in Healthcare Organizations

Standard Work, or the lack thereof, is where many improvement efforts fall short. Without it, gains made are hard to determine, and usually short lived.

The absence of Standard Work invariably means the presence of poor quality and inconsistencies no matter how skilled and well intentioned employees are.

In 2001 a critical care specialist at John Hopkins Hospital, Peter Provonost, decided to do something about reducing infections in the ICU. He put in place a checklist for inserting a line into a patient. This is Standard Work in its simplest form. The results were dramatic, with infection rates improving by 95%.

What is Standard Work?

Standard Work is one of several founding principles of a LEAN system. The definition of Standard Work is “the most effective combination of manpower, materials, and equipment” to complete a task. Standard Work is the method that brings these elements together in a well-defined process. Implementing process improvement and achieving truly sustainable continuous improvement is virtually impossible without having employed Standard Work.

Considering the significance of Standard Work to an organization’s process improvement goals, why do so many choose to short-change this part of their program? In many cases, it’s because Standard Work processes are difficult to do well! While there are many reasons for this, three reasons stand out, including:

- Standard Work requires repetitive processes.
- The development Standard Work packages can be daunting.
- Standard Work often fails to thrive in the workplace because many front-line managers don’t promote or nurture the processes.



Standard Work is much more than setting out the operational procedures for a process. It needs to encompass the overall organizational aspirations and standards, including product or service quality, health and safety standards, environmental standards, legislative demands and customer satisfaction.

Standard Work in Healthcare

Let’s consider the benefits of Standard Work in process improvement programs in the Healthcare sector, specifically the impact on nursing staff.

Estimates show that between 25% and 30% of a nurse’s time is spent on actual patient care. Their days are full of clerical, administrative, supply management, and even housekeeping tasks. There are a lot of duties and processes to learn and support. In many healthcare establishments these processes have not been structured and documented, with inconsistencies from department to department in the same facility.

A well planned and implemented process improvement project will eliminate “waste” so we start to maximize the productivity of the nursing staff, but what happens if new staff are bought in to run these processes? Problems! Having implemented Standard Work across an organization helps alleviate this problem. Processes will be well documented and efficient, and it will be simple to put together training programs to bring new staff up to speed.



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one process at a time”*



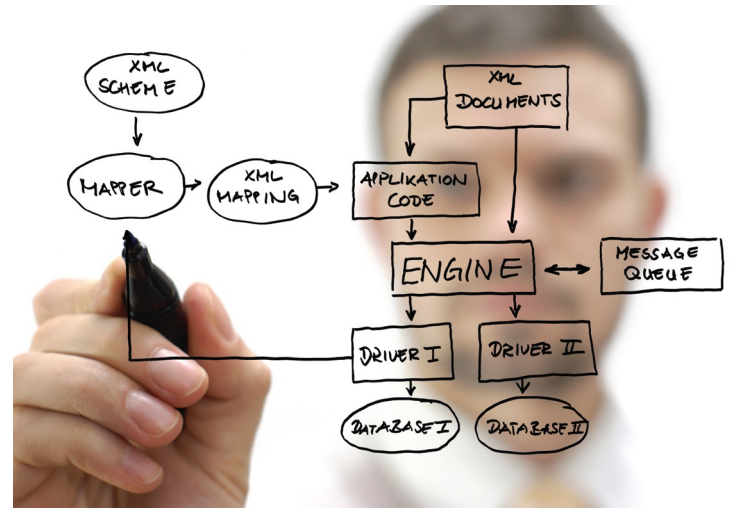
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Additionally, if Standard Work is implemented across an organization it will be possible to achieve commonality between processes in different departments and have a common “look and feel” to the documentation. This will allow cross-training and flexible work capabilities across the nursing staff. One of the other benefits of Standard Work will be consistency, which will improve the quality of the services provided.

Organizations shouldn't fail to effectively implement Standard Work because of the daunting nature of its development documentation. The OpEx process improvement model provides tools that make the development of a Standard Work package a painless experience.

Our Catena® Improvement System helps identify the best process sequence, the time for each step, and discover improvements that can be made. By the end of the project your organization has developed Standard Work for each process, video work instructions so training can be performed in half the time, and clear performance measures for each process based on customer demand.

Finally, Standard Work won't fail if supervisors or caretakers learn how to nurture the system. If you find that the only way Standard Work documents are completed, audited, or updated is for engineers or improvement specialists do it, you have a problem. Supervisors and team leaders are essential to implementing and maintaining Standard Work, managing by process, not just results. Supervisors must be skilled at systematically finding problems with the performance of Standard Work. Part of this can be accomplished through simple observation but, establishing metrics should help monitor the effectiveness of the processes.



Our Catena® Improvement System provides a cost-effective solution when used in conjunction with the Catena® Advance Performance Measurement Module. With this easy to use tool, Supervisors have a powerful range of visual displays that allow them to monitor the operational effectiveness of processes.

In conclusion, Standard Work is a critical element to achieving transformational operational changes and sustained continuous improvement. While implementing Standard Work has its challenges, they become insignificant if the right approaches are taken from the outset of the process improvement program. With Standard Work many benefits are enjoyed, including increased productivity, reduced training time for staff, flexible staffing, consistent performance appraisals, better service, and improved quality.



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