

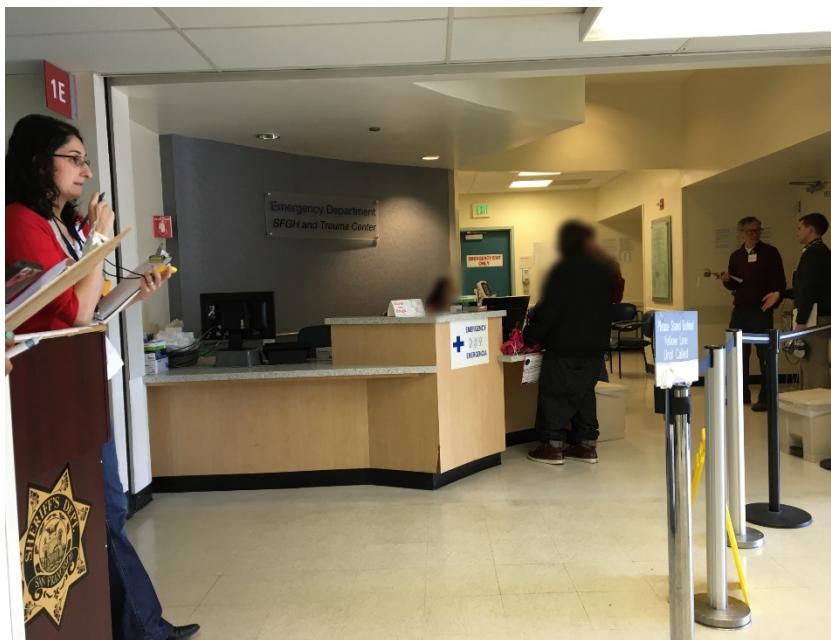
Gemba Walk: “Go and See”

What is a Gemba Walk?

“Gemba” means “the real place” in Japanese. A Gemba Walk is when you go to where the process is happening and observe it. It can also be referred to as a “Go and See”. The idea is that by watching the process happen in real time, you and your colleagues will obtain a much better understanding of what’s really going on with the process.

When should I use it?

- A key component of Lean philosophy is that managers should regularly observe their team's processes in action to stay informed about what is and isn't working well and to stay meaningfully connected to the work
- A Gemba Walk is particularly useful prior to process mapping, as it provides the details needed to build a process map and begin process analysis
- Gemba Walks are particularly useful if any of the below scenarios are taking place:
 - Differing perspectives about how a process *should* operate and how it *actually* operates.
 - Variability in how staff work the process and process outcomes due to a lack of standard work
 - Assumptions are being made about the process based on anecdotes, not evidence
 - Staff are being blamed for problems in the process
 - When there is little or no data about the process. For example, if no metrics have been collected about the process, it's important to at least gather baseline measures, which can be done through a Gemba Walk.



City Performance staff conducting Gemba Walk at SFGH ED in Feb 2016.

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How do I conduct a Gemba Walk?

1. **Determine goals.** If you are observing a process as a manager, you can go on a Gemba Walk at any time. If you want to observe a process to improve it, be sure to include the process improvement team. It's important for the project team to observe what their colleagues do and step back from their daily roles.
2. **Plan ahead.** Let staff know when you plan to observe the process. Explain what a Gemba involves, so they aren't surprised. Emphasize that the Gemba is not intended to judge or micro-manage staff, but to learn from them. They are the process experts. If your process is long and complex, scope one or more parts of the process that can be observed in a day or less.

Assign roles and responsibilities. There are several key roles to play on a Gemba Walk:

- a. **Document steps and times** – it can be helpful to have two staff document steps and times to ensure no steps are missed. You can use the accompanying templates in the toolbox folder. Ask staff non-judgmental, clarifying questions. If appropriate, ask customers about their experience of the process. What would they improve? What are their pain points?

Figure 1. Example of a completed gemba observation form

City Performance – Gemba Observation Form v2

Process:	SFGH Emergency Department Patient Check-In and Triage Process		
Date of Observation:	February 23, 2016		
Start time:	10:00am	End time:	

Step #	Description of step	Step time	Obstacles	Notes
1	Px walks into ED	10:03		Walks into narrow hallway
2	Px looks around for where to go	10:03	Motion; waiting	Poor signage directing patients
3	Px gets into check-in line	10:04	Waiting	Four other people in line
4	Px gets called to counter	10:11		
5	Px provides staff with information	10:11	Extra Work	Px unclear about what it means to have a hospital card
6	Px steps over to the vitals area (very close by) and has vitals taken	10:14	Motion; Waiting	Only one machine – in use by another nurse
7	Px directed to wait for triage nurse; sits on chair	10:22	Waiting	4 minutes was waiting for machine; 4 minutes was vitals being taken
8	Px called to triage room	10:32	Motion	
9	Px exits triage room (triage completed; process ends)	10:40		

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- b. **Collect documents** – a common process obstacle is mistakes on forms. Does your process have any forms, instructions, checklists or other documents that could be improved? Collect them. You can tape them to the bottom of the process map near the step in the process where the form is used.
 - c. **Take photos, if allowed** – ask for permission before taking photos.
3. **Watch multiple iterations of the process.** It's important not to watch only one instance of the process because something unusual could happen. You want to make sure you observe a *typical* experience of the process. That is usually the best place to start when improving a process.

Hints

- Enable staff who work one part of the process to observe other parts of the process. This can help staff better understand the whole process and develop empathy for their colleagues.
- Keep the customer's experience in mind throughout your observations.
- Thank staff for allowing you to observe their process and let them know how you plan to use the info
- Some processes do not lend themselves well to direct observation from start to finish. They may take place over a period of several months, or they may be difficult or time consuming to observe. In such cases, think about the broader principle of Gemba: to get as close as possible to where the work is actually being done. Here are some activities that can take the place of or supplement a traditional Gemba walk:
 - Invite an end customer of your process to share their experience in a Voice of the Customer session.
 - Review the forms, instructions, or web pages that the customer sees from a fresh perspective. Would they be clear to you if you were unfamiliar with the process?
 - Hold your improvement team meetings in the space where the process happens
 - Can you observe a piece of the process? For example, you may not be able to watch a whole contracting process from start to finish, but can you send observers to key meetings to identify problems that occur?