

Organise for full efficiency and effectiveness - The message of 5S

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While 5S provides the desired neat, orderly and clutter-free environment, it also sets in motion the expected mental revolution within the organisation that leads to positive thinking and the preparation of the background for the behavioral and system/analytical aspects of change management. 5S, therefore, acts as a strong catalyst, which is so vital for survival, sustenance and long-term success of an organisation.

The writer views with much satisfaction the extremely positive responses and evidence seen and the advances that have been made towards achieving productivity mainly by initiating 5S in many a public and private sector organisation. However, the most encouraging development in the march towards efficiency and effectiveness is the conscious and conscientious efforts of the schools. A developing country like ours, not blessed with even the most basic amenities, in schools for the students even in the urban environs, is now blessed with a way out - a methodology to maximize the existing meagre resources,

thanks to 5S. 5S is considered the helm to access the realm of organisational and national productivity.

However, one wonders whether the feverish enthusiasm shown by many an organisation has been the result of the perfect understanding of the philosophy of this whole activity and the genuine objective of reaping the full harvest of 5S and productivity or whether it is due to any fashionable thinking to keep abreast with other pace-setters. It needs no saying that the introduction of various colour combinations/codings (it being a distinct strategy in the 5S methodology) would carry away a person from the basics embedded in the concept.

Performing rituals or understanding the concept and philosophy

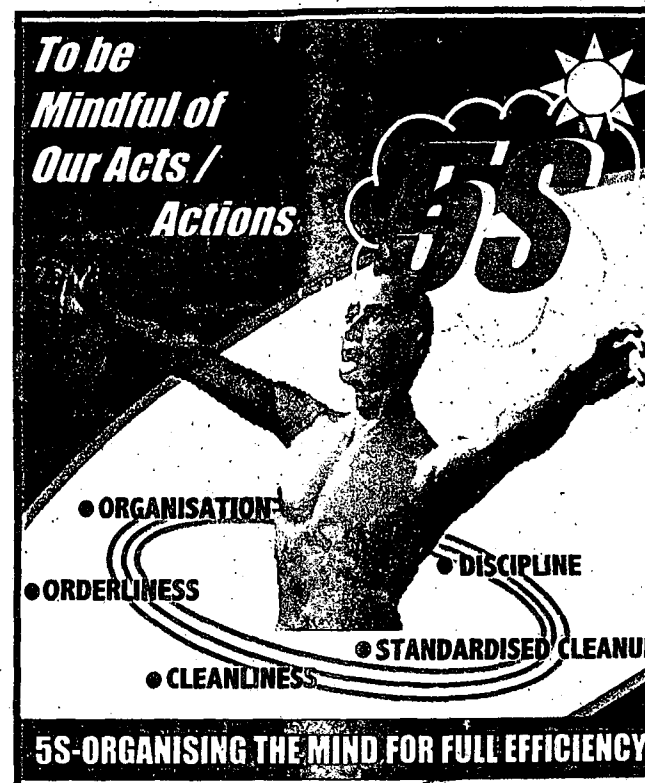
Which should come first?

If we take religion as an example, how should we apply the above. If we consider starting with the performance of rituals, we will only succeed practising the religion indirectly giving more emphasis - weightage to its pomp and pageantry. Obviously such colour and rituals will hold one's interest in the movement for sometime; that is until the rituals captivate their minds. The human being is mainly a visually-directed creature. Thereafter, continuity of their interest would only be by adding more colour and rituals

into the system. If not it will either die a natural death or it will deviate from the main objectives for which it stood initially. The reason for this outcome is not difficult to realise. Any movement, whether it be a religion or otherwise, will not sustain unless its basics and philosophy are clearly and logically spelt out by those that matter and the adherents realise its goals and objectives with the same degree of clarity.

Evidence has revealed that many an institution that had colourfully (gleefully as well) started 5S programmes had colourlessly wound them up, with the fading away of the colours of their coding systems! These evidences succinctly emphasise the plain truth that for any movement to take a firm footing its philosophy, goals and objectives are the first ingredients that should be driven into the minds of the target groups. In this context, it is very appropriate to commence the 5W1H (Why-What-When-Where-Who-How) questionnaire with WHY. Let alone the programme one is going to launch the first interrogative to raise if you intend closing the gap between your emotions and intellect is WHY. Unless you seek the answer to WHY you would be surely groping in the dark, charged until your emotions last!

Why 5S? to be organised



Productivity, Business Re-engineering, Cost-Reduction, Minimising Costs and other related terminology that are being used in current business environs, boils down to the basic fact of constantly rising pressure to deliver with fewer resources. The term 'Resources' does not only mean the tangible assets men, machinery, money but also all other aspects/elements that contribute to the ultimate deliv-

ery of services or products. Hence, the more conspicuous advantages that could be accrued by being organised are:

- * eliminating time wasted firefighting and responding to crises;
- * focusing more on things that contribute to producing of results;
- * the ability to perceive more accurately complex issues - problems and challenges;

- * gaining more time for socialising and leisure;
- * reducing stress and fatigue;
- * inculcating team spirit as organising is a collective effort and activity;
- * realising a greater sense of achievement; and
- * taking pride in a job well done.

The strongest contention for introducing 5S in an institution, as the writer considers, is that it provides the base and basis for launching further programmes towards the realisation of productivity. While 5S provides the desired neat, orderly and clutter-free environment, it also sets in motion the much expected mental revolution within the organisation that leads to positive thinking and the preparation of the background for the behavioral and system/analytical aspects of change management.

5S, therefore, acts as a strong catalyst - a change agent, which is so vital for survival, sustenance, and long-term success of an organisation. Any traditional means of inculcating the desired mental-frame/positive attitude to bring about the necessary change/changes may under normal circumstances be costly, time-consuming and at times may even be counter-productive.

This is a critical factor that needs careful handling and implementation. One may wonder why no mention is made of office-automation and I.T. in bringing about the expected

change/changes in institutions. The information age provides us with some of the tools to organise our working lives, but it also presents us with many new challenges in the form of additional paperwork, expectations of immediacy, and interruptions to our routines.

Moreover, unlike I.T., 5S encompasses the whole workforce, CEO downwards, and it does not allow anyone to escape as all become active players/participants (and not passive onlookers) of the 'group-drama'. Automation and more specifically I.T. would assume a supplementary role in this whole episode.

5S and mindfulness (Samma Sati) -

Organising the mind for full efficiency

The 5S methodology rests on five-pillars i.e.,

* Organisation - Clearly separating the needed items from the rest and eliminating the latter.

* Orderliness - Keeping the needed items in their proper places to facilitate easy and immediate retrieval.

* Cleanliness - Maintaining a well swept and cleaned workplace.

* Standardised cleanup - Organisation - Orderliness and cleanliness being maintained.

* Discipline - Making a habit of maintaining the established procedures.

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All these clearly boil down to 'being mindful of all our acts and actions'. That is to say that one should think before he does anything as his act/action should fulfil the intended objective and that he should follow the best possible approach/methodology for its accomplishment. Isn't it 'Samma sati'? 'Samma sati' is the seventh discipline in the Noble eight-fold path of the Buddha's teachings. It represents the core concepts of Buddhism and one who wishes to realise the way - truth (i.e. 'marga sathya') is expected to tread on the noble eight-fold path.

Daniel Webster says the above differently: "Mind is the great lever of all things; human thought is the process by which human ends are ultimately answered". All these connote the basic fact that there is only one thing that can help you avoid chaos in business - in social dealings - in life itself, that thing is organizing your mind in order to realise your pursuits. According to Charles Darwin 'the highest possible stage in moral culture is when we recognise that we ought to control our thoughts'.

Organisation - A unit eagerly awaiting systemisation

5S - Promotes systematic/organised thinking

It has now been accepted that basically, organisation is simply a question of systemisation, 5S helps people think clearly and in an organised manner. Further, it cannot simply be entertained that a person would deliberately/willfully tolerate inefficiency in himself. It is mainly in this context that 5S should be propagated continuously and more vigorously in every possible nook and corner of the country. It is true that the concept has gained much steam mainly with the conducting of periodic productivity and 5S competitions. But it needs a more conscious/conscientious and a concerted effort on the part of those that matter, if the country is to be truly placed on the highway of productivity and prosperity.

The fastest, most efficient, easiest and best way of doing anything, is the organised way. 5S amply and aptly provides guidance and acts as mentor and consultant to those who wish to get system and order into their acts/actions in order to make themselves more productive.

You live the way you think