

BEST PRACTICES OF A GEMBA WALK

Gemba walks are a management practice used in lean manufacturing and continuous improvement processes to observe, understand, and improve how work is performed on the ground, directly where value is created.

The term “Gemba” is a Japanese word meaning “where the action happens.” In a business context, it refers to the actual worksite where the core activities occur.

Preparation and Planning



Set a clear objective: Define the specific area or process to focus on during the walk to guide observations and questions. Try to follow the workstream from start to finish.



Choose the right team: Include relevant stakeholders from different levels to gain diverse perspectives. Let all employees in the areas know in advance the purpose, timing, and who will be part of the walk.

Additional Resources

Refer to the [Key Elements](#) of a Gemba walk for more details.

During the Walk



Observe actively: Pay close attention to the workflow, inefficient processes, quality issues, potential bottlenecks, and any safety concerns. Take notes and ask questions to understand why this is occurring. If possible, take photos for later analysis.



Engage with employees: Introduce the GEMBA lead, ask open-ended questions directly to workers involved in the process, and actively listen to their feedback.



Focus on the process, not individuals: Avoid judgment or criticism toward anyone and instead focus on identifying areas for how to reduce waste within the system. Approach with a desire to understand the situation; not with a perspective of seeking to make improvements.



Document observations: Take notes of key details on the [Food Waste Idea Record Forms](#) provided, including visual observations, employee concerns, and potential reduction opportunities.



Food Waste Idea Reduction Forms

Print multiple copies of the [Food Waste Idea Reduction Form](#), use a clipboard and give each team 10 copies.

Post-Walk Actions



Analyze findings: Add all observations from the [Food Waste Idea Record Forms](#) to the [Opportunity Register](#) and identify recurring themes or areas requiring immediate attention.



Share insights: Communicate key learnings with relevant teams and leadership to facilitate collaborative problem-solving.



Develop action plan: Create actionable steps based on the findings, assigning ownership and timelines for improvement initiatives.



Pilot an idea: Test food waste reduction ideas suited to the organization or setting, and assess their impact by conducting a waste audit before and after the pilot.



Follow up: Regularly check on the progress of implemented changes and conduct additional Gemba walks to monitor ongoing improvement.



Analyze Findings

Enter all the ideas gathered into the [Opportunity Register](#).