

# Distribution Center MANAGEMENT

## Productivity

### 5-S organizational approach helps improve workplace productivity

Instead of studying the “3 Rs,” take a look at the the “5 Ss.” 5-S “is a strategy for creating a clean, safe and orderly work environment and establishing the disciplined routines necessary to maintain it,” notes Douglas Rabeneck, a productivity consultant for H. B. Maynard and Company Inc., in Pittsburgh.

In addition, the significant results that can be achieved by implementing 5-S “get everybody so involved and interested in improvement that it changes the culture of the organization,” he says.

As a result, “implementing 5-S is a great way to get buy-in, involve people in making changes to their operation, and show them the results of their efforts.” Here’s a look at 5-S and how it works.

#### The five tactics

5-S is “a systematic way to improve the work environment” that can be implemented virtually anywhere — at home, in the office, and in the warehouse. It can be implemented by one individual or by a team throughout an entire distribution center, Rabeneck explains. Simply put, 5-S is “a powerful discipline for changing the workplace and influencing how individuals approach the workplace.”

5-S, which originated in Japan,

was one of the techniques used so successfully in the Toyota Production System. The name comes from the names of the five tactics, each of which begins with “S.”

- **Sort & Remove** — During this stage, everything available to do the work in a particular area is sorted through, and each item — whether inventory, packaging materials, or tools and equipment — is evaluated as to whether or not it’s needed. Items that are not needed are tagged and moved to a “holding area” until they can be further evaluated and disposed of.

This “spring cleaning” can yield all kinds of surprises. One company, for example, discovered that it had 2.5 years’ worth of demand for a particular part that was taking up valuable space in the DC.

- **Shine & Inspect** — Once the clutter is gone from the work area, the next step is to restore equipment and work surfaces to “like new” condition. This tactic is designed to create a more pleasant work environment and to get equipment and tools in tip-top shape.

- **Set Locations and Visual Cues** — This tactic organizes the workspace with storage locations clearly identified for each item that’s required. The locations should be close to the point of use,

easy to reach, and labeled with visual cues or markings that clearly indicate where the item belongs. “The goal is to create an efficient workplace that visually speaks to the associates so order can be easily maintained,” Rabeneck explains.

- **System-a-tize** — The purpose of this tactic is to “determine what it takes to keep the environment clean and orderly,” Rabeneck says, and to establish the routines that will keep the order maintained.

- **Stay the Course** — This tactic involves checks and motivators that keep the 5-S spirit and commitment alive until the new way of working becomes habitual. It includes setting goals and establishing rewards. For example, when Maynard implemented 5-S at its own offices, it established a three-tier rating system. Individuals received a gift certificate to a restaurant when they completed the first S, when they had completed the first three Ss, and when they had systematized and maintained the new way of working.

#### Putting 5-S to work

The first step in implementing 5-S, Rabeneck says, is to select a champion for the project. This may be an overall project champion, usually a management person.

One warehouse  
uncovered a two  
and a half years’  
supply of one part.

[www.DistributionGroup.com](http://www.DistributionGroup.com)

Reprinted from *Distribution Center Management*

© 2002 Alexander Communications Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

DO NOT EDIT OR ALTER REPRINTS • REPRODUCTION NOT PERMITTED

There may also be a site champion or pilot area champion who is often an associate. The champion is part of a core implementation team (CIT), which is trained in the 5-S tactics and coordinates the grass roots effort, according to Rabeneck.

Deciding where to implement 5-S in the DC or warehouse is

next. One automobile parts distributor, for example, elected to focus on its small-package shipping area. "It was very disorganized, messy, and people were using old information to make shipping decisions," Rabeneck says. Through the 5-S process, obsolete material was removed and the shipping area was

cleaned and reorganized.

"The company was so impressed with the benefits, improvements, and change in employee attitude, that they ended up training 45 people in 5-S and are now doing projects in multiple DCs," Rabeneck reports.

[www.hbmaynard.com](http://www.hbmaynard.com). **DCM**

H. B. Maynard & Co., Inc.

## Company Profile

**M**aynard® is an international consulting, software, and training business dedicated to providing innovative solutions to improve workforce performance and eliminate waste. Formed in 1934 and headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the company is recognized as a leader in the areas of industrial engineering and productivity management.

Our core offerings align with the nine disciplines of the Maynard Workforce Performance Model™. These disciplines include: 5-S, Work Flow Design, Best Methods, Setup Reduction, Engineered Standards, Workforce Training, Staffing and Reporting, Wage Alignment and Managing Performance. In support of each discipline we offer training courses, software applications, and consulting assistance.

We serve a variety of industries in the manufacturing, distribution, utility, and service sectors. Since the disciplines presented in the model impact any type of organization, we have not limited the industries we serve. We have helped clients successfully improve workforce performance in offices, distribution centers, retail stores, banks, and pharmaceutical companies, in addition to all types of traditional manufacturing and assembly operations.

We are proud to have partnered with so many excellent companies. We serve hundreds of established and new clients each year. Our client list includes many Fortune 500 companies, but also a number of small and medium-sized businesses. Our average annual repeat business is over 60%. We sincerely enjoy the win-win relationships we have with our clients.

**Mission Statement:**  
*Maynard provides tools, training, and guidance to our clients to help them improve workforce performance and eliminate waste.*

Unlike many traditional consulting firms consisting of individual experts developing a number of independent practice groups, we are a team of professionals striving to be value-centered, business-like, and mission-driven. We work together to serve our clients and to develop innovative new offerings to continuously increase the value we bring to them.

Our people are at the heart of our success. We have established a comprehensive recruiting strategy to ensure that we hire the best candidates. We invest significant time and money in training to continuously enhance the technical, managerial and leadership capabilities of our staff. We live by a set of core values that guide us in all that we do.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Maynard is our commitment to practicing what we preach. We firmly believe that the Maynard Workforce Performance Model applies to all types of organizations, including ours. A tour of our offices will quickly reveal our practice of the disciplines of a Lean Workplace. A review of our operating procedures will demonstrate our approach to Standard Work. And, a study of our communication systems and management approach will show how we use the disciplines in Managing Performance.

Internationally, our software and training products are represented by a network of distributors.



H. B. Maynard and Company, Inc.  
Eight Parkway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15220  
1-800-MAYNARD Fax: 412-921-4575 [www.hbmaynard.com](http://www.hbmaynard.com)

Copyright ©2001 H. B. Maynard and Co., Inc. All rights reserved.

### Distribution Center Management

28 West 25th Street — 8th Floor • New York, NY 10010-2705

Telephone: (212) 228-0246 • Fax: (212) 228-0376 • Email: [info@DistributionGroup.com](mailto:info@DistributionGroup.com) • Website: [www.DistributionGroup.com](http://www.DistributionGroup.com)

*Distribution Center Management* is published monthly by Alexander Communications Group, Inc., which provides news, data and information on key distribution and warehousing topics through newsletters, books and looseleaf services.



© 2002 Alexander Communications Group, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Alexander Communications Group.