

WHAT IS A GEMBA WALK AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As the year winds down and you're deep in strategic planning and budgeting sessions, don't forget to stretch your legs and get a real, live look at how your organization operates. *Gemba* is derived from the Japanese phrase meaning "The Real Place." Process improvement brainstorming can only go so far in conference rooms and virtual meetings. It's critical to observe the space where "the real work happens" in order to make a bigger impact on improvement. When you place *gemba* at the center of your organizational culture, it puts these powerful tools in the hands of workers and decision makers:

1. The power of observation
2. The power of inquiry and dialogue
3. The power of meaningful improvements

HOW TO TAKE A GEMBA WALK?

1. Identify process walk questions for a data collection chart.

Learn about the process from your team and collect impactful data with the right effectiveness questions. Examples include:

- What starts the process?
- What happens, who does it, when do they do the step?
- How do they complete this step? Anything in the way?
- How long does it take? What's the delay until the next step?

2. Record your gemba walk.

Record your observations by any means necessary to capture and preserve details and interviews in real time.

3. Create a manageable schedule.

Take your time during data collection. Give it your undivided attention—don't just see, *observe and investigate*—so no detail is missed.

4. Take action!

Use the data you've collected to inform a process map or other improvement activity.



LEARN MORE!

If you're an ASQ member, you can download the article "[Talk the Walk](#)" by [Donald Arp](#) to better understand how *gemba* will enhance your data collection by asking the right questions. The article includes a helpful example data collection chart that will help guide you and identify areas of improvement in your own organization.

ASQ also offers an interactive, self-paced, easy-to-navigate course, "[Gemba: Going to the Source](#)," that explains the fundamentals of *gemba*, how it relates to lean, and how to analyze *gemba* in different situations.

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