

# Visual Management

## What is a Visual Management?

Visual management is a way of making processes in the work area visible to help the flow of work. In visual management, simple **visual tools** are used to show "at a glance" the status of a machine, a resource, or an entire working area with a plan or definable objective. (Galsworth, 1997). Ideally your work place should have visual tools that are:

- > Simple
- > Clear
- > Real time
- > Based at point of use
- > Available to all
- > Shows progress toward agreed goal

## Why do we need Visual Management?

The ideal process has been defined as one that is able to meet customer demand, is error free, flows without delay and **where everyone can see how well the process is operating** (Dan Jones Lean Thinking, 1996). In busy, dynamic work environments, processes flow more smoothly when everyone can see how the process is working in real time.

## Creating a Visual Workplace

The eventual goal of visual management is to create a Visual Workplace. A Visual Workplace is "a work environment that is

- > self - explaining,
- > self - ordering,
- > self - regulating and
- > self - improving

Where what is supposed to happen does happen, on time, every time, day and night" (*Galsworth, G. 2010 p.6*)



## How do you know if you need a visual tool?

Ask yourself these three questions:

**Q1 “What do I need to know?”** : What do I need to know do perform the right work at the right time. e.g. who am I working with, who is the leader today, what is the next step for the patient, who is looking after them today. Is this information available to me without me having to seek it out?

**Q2 “What do I need to share?”**:

What knowledge do I have that could be very useful for others to perform their work or do it better without asking multiple questions? e.g plan for the patient, where equipment is. Often we know what we need to know but may not think about what others might need to know.

**Q3 What questions am I frequently asked?** : When you can identify what questions you are often asked you are able to identify the “information deficits” in your current workplace. Galsworth(1997) developed the concept of the “first question is free”. If someone asks you a question once – answer it. If someone else asks you the same question consider a visual tool so that you never have to answer that question again!

## Examples of problems in health care in which visual devices are used to improve performance

> **Problem:** All clinicians not knowing ‘at a glance ’ the plan for the patient Manual Journey Board Template, Manual Journey Board Poster, Electronic Journey Board Poster

**Problem:** Not knowing the Discharge Dates in your health service. Discharge Traffic Lights

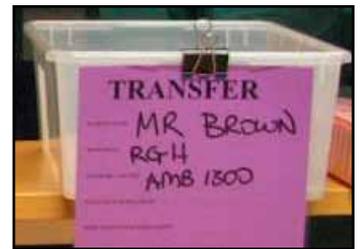
> **Problem:** Uneven and invisible workload at night for Training Medical Officers Medical Task Board Presentation

## Other visual management examples

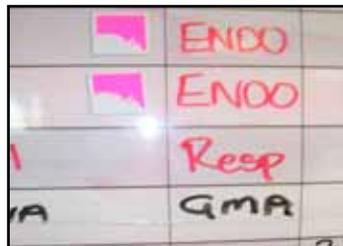
Prominent lanyards for specific roles to reduce the number of questions asked.



Discharge baskets with visual cues so all staff know what the patient is waiting for.



Magnets denoting country patients, usually more complex discharges.



Medication vests makes it safer for the patient by reducing interruptions to the nurse



Visual control Boards displaying improvement activities for all staff to see



### Reference

Galsworth. G 1997 Visual Systems 'Harnessing the power of a visual workplace'. Amacon. American Management Association New York  
Galsworth. G 2010 'Work that makes sense' Visual Lean Press, Portland, Oregon  
Womack, J & Jones, D 1996 'Lean Thinking' Free Press New York



<http://www.gilf.gov.au/>

For more information  
Redesigning care  
Southern Adelaide Local Health Network  
Telephone (08) 82046260

[HEALTH.FMCR redesigningcare@health.sa.gov.au](mailto:HEALTH.FMCR redesigningcare@health.sa.gov.au)  
[www.flinders.sa.gov.au/redesigningcare](http://www.flinders.sa.gov.au/redesigningcare)



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