

5 WAYS TO **SAVE**



time & money
ON YOUR NEXT JOB



Introduction

Finding new ways to save time and money on your next job takes a unique mix of skills. Not only do you need the knowledge and authority to make changes, but you also have to be able to use a fresh perspective, reframe problems, and rethink your key performance indicators (KPIs).

Chances are, you've probably optimized your site, making incremental changes that resulted in marginal improvements. Nothing wrong with that. But perhaps you haven't tried a fundamentally new approach to tackle existing problems.

It's not easy.
Take Seth Godin's short story about nesting bowls:



Nesting Bowls by Seth Godin

"Seven bowls might take up an entire cabinet.






But if the designer slopes the sides of each bowl just so, they stack. The amount of space required to store them goes down by 80%.

The hard part isn't figuring out how to stack them. It's realizing that stacking is an option."ⁱ





5 IDEAS THAT CAN HELP YOU SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY

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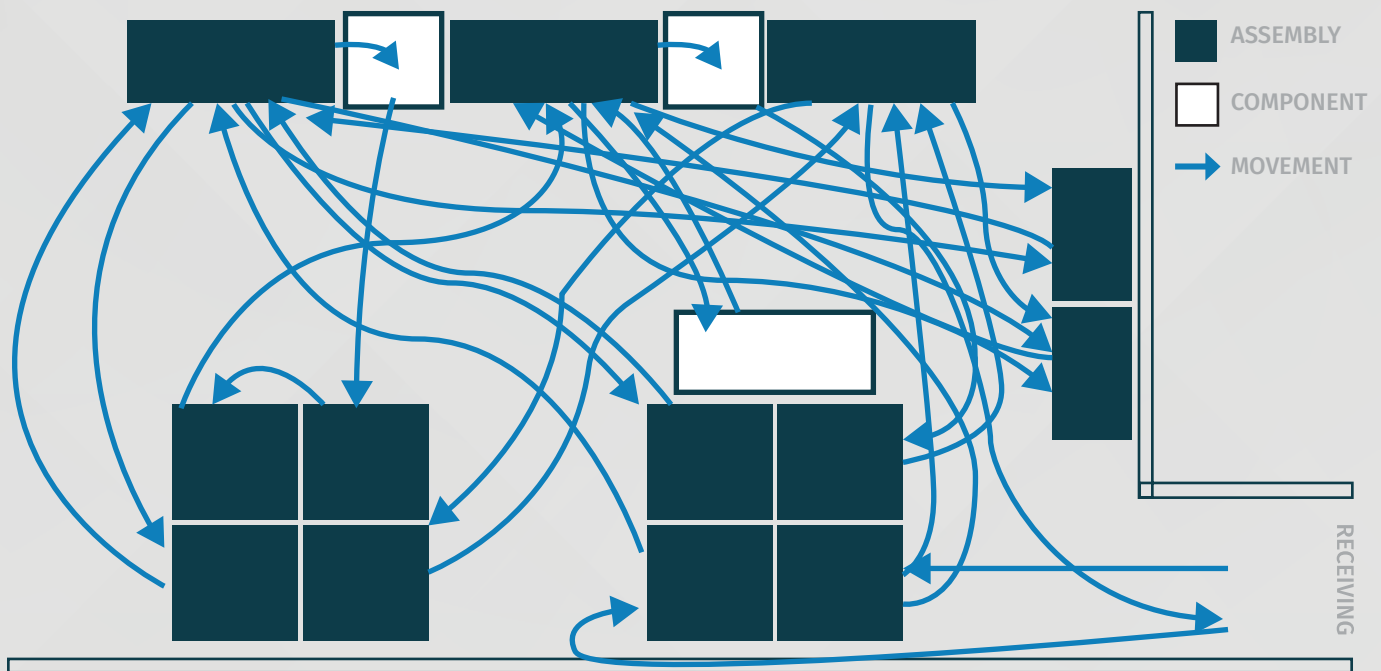
1. Think of time as money

No – really – the cliché is true. Many of us look at how we can save money through intense negotiations with our suppliers to reduce individual product prices. But that only gets you so far – and will probably leave you short of your cost-saving goals or profit objectives.

Instead, focus on how you can deliver more time throughout your operations. When you provide more time, you create the capacity to do more work with the same set of resources.

Spend some effort drawing a spaghetti diagramⁱⁱ. A spaghetti diagram visualizes the flow of workers and products in a process to identify potential areas of improvement. It also helps you see how your team physically moves through your workspace.ⁱⁱⁱ

Start by mapping your workspace. Then, identify and number the stations where work happens. Last, draw lines indicating movement.



Example of a spaghetti chart for product flows along value streams.

Once you have your spaghetti on a plate, it becomes a little more evident to:



Identify stations employees frequently visit and make them easier to reach.



Group related tasks closer to each other.



Wherever possible, make paper tasks electronic



Place stations in “C” or “U” shape to improve flow and communication

2. It's always tool time

Do you have high-priced, skilled electricians spending time finding materials instead of using those materials? A handy metric to use is “Time on Tool.” Asked another way, how much time do your high-value employees spend using their tools?

For instance, if an electrician spends two hours of an eight-hour day working with their tools, their Time on Tool is 25%. You can increase Time on Tool when you reduce the time your electricians have to:

- Travel to and from a location
- Gather equipment and parts
- Coordinate with other teams
- Review logs and history
- Complete paperwork



3. Your supply chain is bigger than you think

When you focus on getting product out the door, you can easily lose sight of managing what comes in the door. The whole point of your supply chain is to make sure your employees have what they need, when and where they need it. But a lot of factors contribute to making that happen cost-effectively. Here are some thought-provoking questions you might ask yourself:

- What's your procurement process? What kind of guidelines does your team have to assist buying decisions?
- How do you receive materials? Are things misplaced, perhaps because they're not inventoried?
- How do you decide where to stage your supplies? Are your most frequently used supplies the easiest to reach?
- How do you manufacture, configure, and deliver your end product?
- Last, how do you invoice for your work? Is it as simple and error-free as possible?



4. Go to the Gemba

“Gemba” is a Japanese word meaning “the real place.” In this context, it means where the work actually happens. Hint: It’s not at your desk or inside a conference room – but on the factory or warehouse floor.

Former Toyota Chairman Fujio Cho’s famous lean principles instruct us to “Go see, ask why, show respect.”^{iv}

Here’s how this can be applied today.





Go see

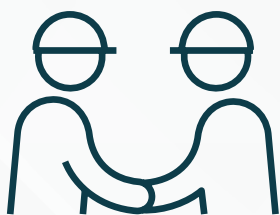
When you “go see,” observe the process rather than the people. This isn’t the time for a performance evaluation. Instead, it’s a time to ensure your people have the right process, material, and capacity to produce a quality product. As you make regular visits, you can evaluate the process using different lenses. For instance, you might focus one visit on process efficiency, the next on safety, and the next on quality.

Pro Tip: It might be awkward the first time you go to the gemba. (Your associates might not be accustomed to seeing you there). That’s okay. Start anyway. Make it a habit. This makes each visit easier than the last.



Ask why

First, observe how the work is done. Then, ask why it’s done that way. Asking why (even asking five times in a row)⁴ helps you gain a more detailed understanding of the situation. And it can point to the root cause of a problem. Often, it points to a problem you have more authority to fix than the people at the gemba.



Show respect

Going to the gemba shouldn’t feel like a site inspection from the boss. You’re not there to blame anyone or evaluate individual talent. Instead, arrive with a learner’s mind. You’re there to collaborate with your team and find problems together. That way, your focus is on the weak spots of the process, not the weak spots of the people.

5. It adds up to favorable drop-through

Drop-through addresses your organization's ability to take on more work without increasing costs. In essence, how much of a new job can you get to "drop-through" to your bottom line?

Building spaghetti diagrams, measuring time on tool, reviewing your supply chain, and going to the gemba should all result in increased drop-through. And at the end of the day, that's how you scale your business.

The good news? You don't have to do this all on your own. Summit's Solutions Team is dedicated to looking at existing problems from a different point of view. It doesn't cost anything to bring them with you on your next visit to the gemba.

And they've stacked a few bowls before.

Call (800) 488-5500 for your
FREE Site Assessment.



Endnotes:

- i The nesting bowls.
(2021, April 5). Seth's Blog.
<https://seths.blog/2021/08/the-nestingbowls/>
- ii What is a Spaghetti Diagram,
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<https://asq.org/quality-resources/spaghetti-diagram>
- iii The spaghetti diagram: A definitive guide.
MiroBlog. (2022, July 6).
<https://miro.com/blog/spaghetti-diagram/>
- iv How to go to the gemba: Go see, ask why,
show respect. Lean Enterprise Institute.
John Shook. (2021, November 8).
<https://www.lean.org/the-lean-post/articles/how-to-go-to-the-gemba-go-see-ask-why-show-respect/>

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Fujio Cho | Automotive Hall of Fame. (n.d.).
<https://www.automotivehalloffame.org/honoree/fujio-cho/>

Interviews with Ryan Oehring
(VP, Service & Solutions – Summit Electric
Supply) and Brendan Wiley
(Op Director, Service & Solutions – Summit
Electric Supply) on December 2, 2022.





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