

Study Guide: Gemba Walk

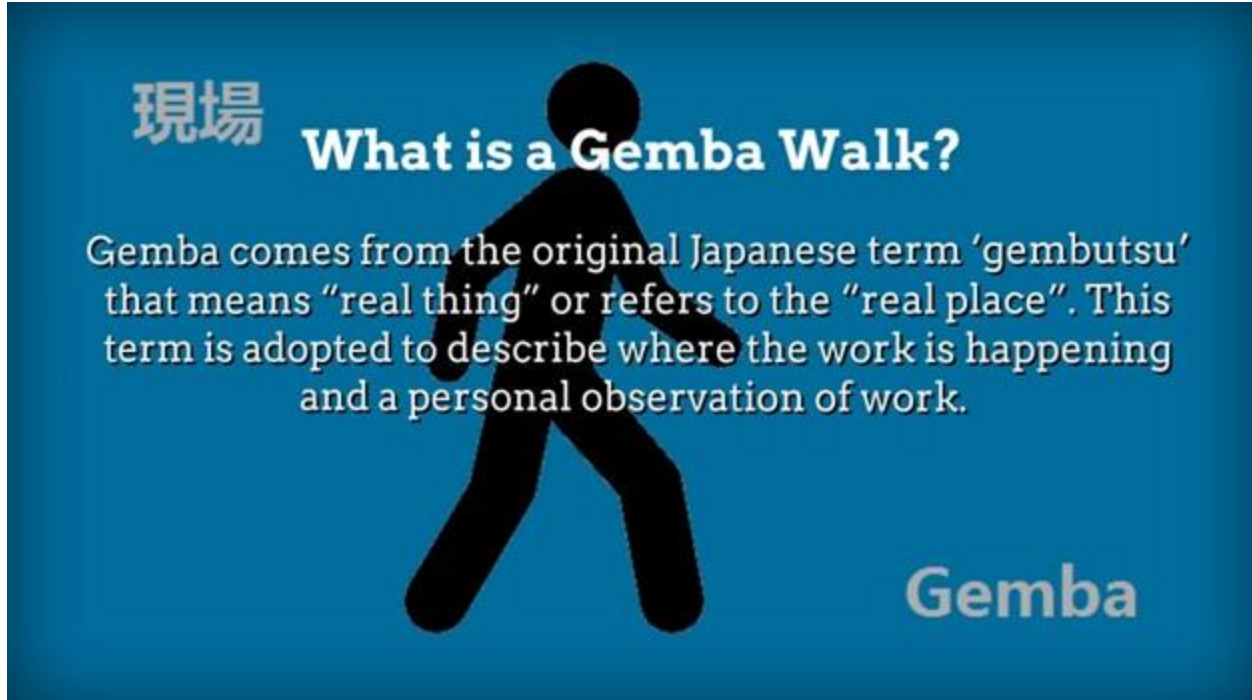


This course provides a foundational understanding of Gemba Walks and how they support a Lean Six Sigma transformation. It explains the tactical and strategic implications of routinely spending time "where the work is done" to stay grounded in the reality of the business.

What is a Gemba Walk?

Gemba walks are essential to building and improving a Continuous Improvement culture.

Gemba means "actual place". Further, it is a core part of the Continuous Improvement values being customer-centric, fact-based, and personally accountable by making the effort to go see with our own eyes while engaging directly with people where they create value.



現場 What is a Gemba Walk?

Gemba comes from the original Japanese term 'gembutsu' that means "real thing" or refers to the "real place". This term is adopted to describe where the work is happening and a personal observation of work.

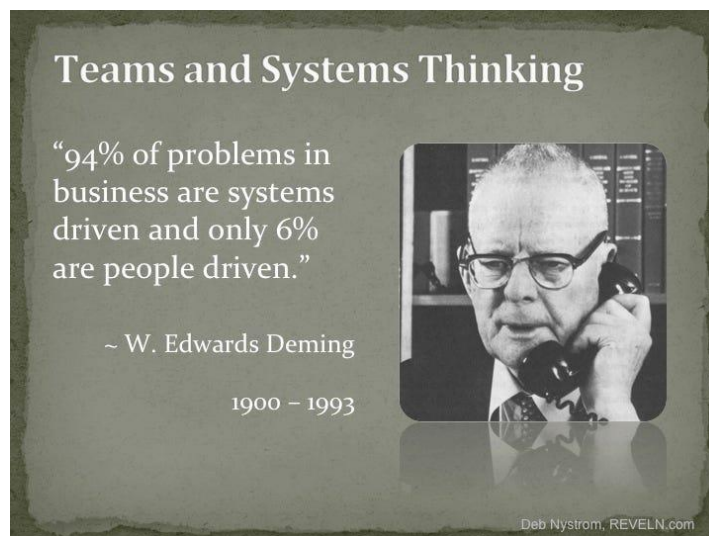
Gemba

Put another way, a gemba walk is an opportunity to "get out of our chair" and go see reality.

Why is it necessary to go see the process with our own eyes?

We otherwise get out of touch with reality. Left alone, processes and systems get worse, not better.

Dr Deming said that 94% of our issues belong to "common cause" issues produced by our systems. Only 4% belong to special causes. He also said its the job of management to design, build, and continuously improve the system.



Teams and Systems Thinking

"94% of problems in business are systems driven and only 6% are people driven."

~ W. Edwards Deming

1900 – 1993

Deb Nystrom, REVELN.com

Employees often get blamed for issues produced by the system provided to them. Gemba walks help managers to see the problems for themselves so they can better help to address them.

What a Gemba Walk Isn't

A gemba walk is not:

- A random walk around the office to see how things are going
- An exercise in being seen
- Making management presence visible
- Another way of auditing a process

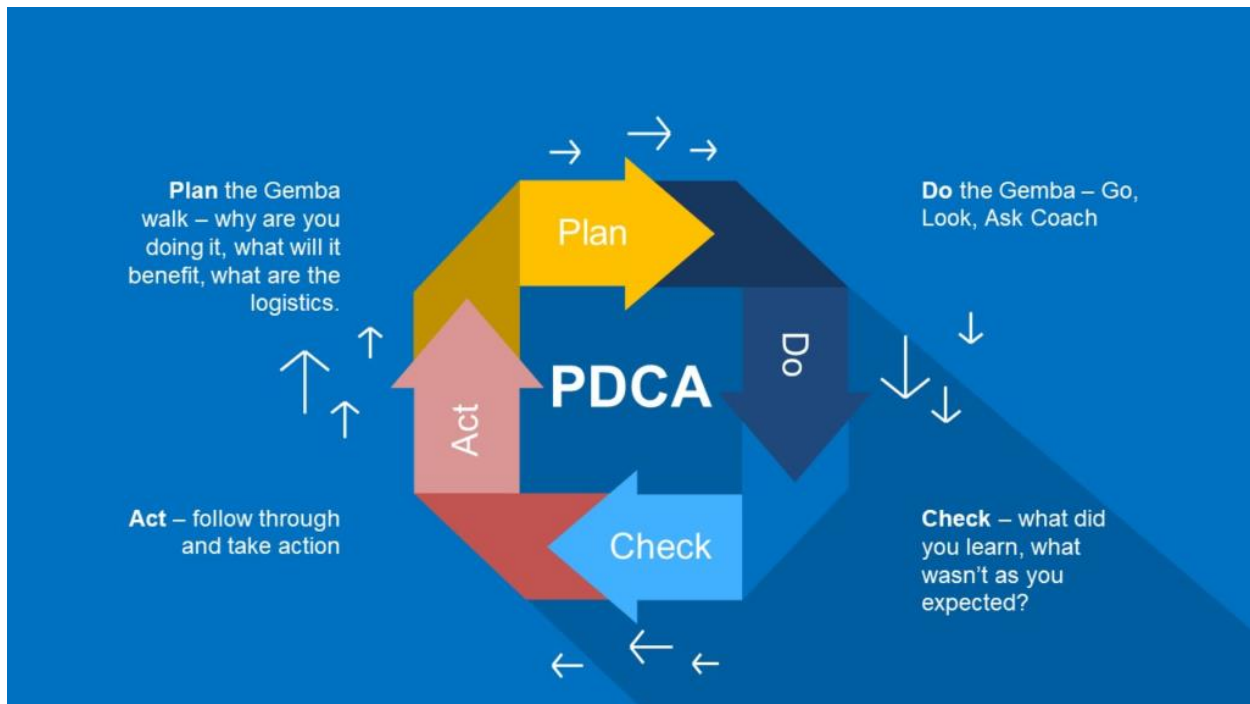
Things to do at Gemba	Things not to do at Gemba
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Start a list of Tech Debt – prioritize it using business terms <input type="checkbox"/> Don't fix everything as it happens <input type="checkbox"/> Watch for a recurring pattern and commit to fixing one thing <input type="checkbox"/> Have lunch with the teams <input type="checkbox"/> Lighten the mood / elevate the tone <input type="checkbox"/> Talk about why the work is important to the client <input type="checkbox"/> Make personal notes about feedback you would like to share when timing is right <input type="checkbox"/> Look at the Sprint plan – is the team adjusting? Accounting for risks? <input type="checkbox"/> If team dynamics are 'off'; observe! Try to find out the causes and conditions driving the individual behavior(s). What about the whole is impacting the one? <input type="checkbox"/> Lead a Product Backlog Refinement session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Don't worry about looking dumb <input type="checkbox"/> Don't worry about trying to impress the team <input type="checkbox"/> Don't rush to judgement or solutioning <input type="checkbox"/> Leave for long periods of time <input type="checkbox"/> Get frustrated at the first sign of issues/problems <input type="checkbox"/> Constantly check phone or email <input type="checkbox"/> Check-out

A leader who is doing gemba walks to point out problems for other people to fix does not contribute to a culture of Continuous Improvement. In fact, this approach can erode trust and make the leader "unwelcomed" by the people they should be seeking to serve.

The Gemba Mindset

There are characteristics that all gemba walks have in common, especially around how we approach observation and human interaction.

The gemba walks follows a learning pattern similar to PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, and Act)



We must approach gemba walks with a particular mindset and attitude:

1. We must **approach the gemba walk with humility**, fostering trust and respect. We should explain the purpose of the gemba walk and explain the blame-free attitude toward people
2. We must **take a critical eye toward the process**. While we always want to avoid blaming people, we must be tough on the process. Leaders should approach with a beginners mind and be willing to learn. The leader is trying to understand how to get the best out of people and the process
3. We must **look at the process from the customer's perspective**. We must not make excuses or accept things as they are. We have to ask "would I pay for that?". We must question whether or not each process step is included in for what's in the customer's best interest

