

Standardized Work is one of the most important and familiar components of the Toyota Production System (TPS). Unfortunately it is one of the most misunderstood elements of the system as well. Mistaken assumptions exist outside of Toyota that this document is the only way the company documents jobs, trains people, or conducts produce improvement. The truth is quite different as you will learn from these documents.

Most people learn Standardized Work in Toyota in some on the job format. Special courses do exist however for supervisor and engineering personnel in the company. The typical pattern is a week long course that meets each day for a couple of hours that is lead by a certified instructor. For over two decades the person in charge of developing the Standardized Work training material and certifying trainers was Isao Kato.

Although now retired Mr. Kato was kind enough to share with me a version of Standardized Work that he put together for private use after he retired from the company. The material is true to the original and yet also expands in a couple of key places where Mr. Kato felt necessary for audiences outside of Toyota. I have translated the material and it is indeed superior to the five day course I attended back in Japan.

Of course mere possession of this material does not make anyone an expert in Standardized Work. There are several sections that can not be taught unless you have seen them demonstrated and the key points elaborated upon. Also as with all Toyota material this is geared towards a situation with discrete parts, repetitive demand, and similar cycle times. Unless these conditions are true you'll soon find out that "pure" standardized work is quite difficult. Other documents and methods exist in Toyota for these situations.

None the less, Standardized Work continues to be a magnet for people attracted to the Toyota Production System and it is a key ingredient for success in certain types of production shops. If you patiently study the five sessions of Standardized Work stored on this website you'll learn a great deal by osmosis on how Toyota actually describes and teaches this topic. At a minimum I hope it clears up some confusion regarding the nature of actual Standardized Work.

Copying the material contained on this site is not advised for several reasons. First you are probably not like Toyota in terms of volume, production processes, or work content. In its current form I'm not sure how useful the material is for your respective situation. Second is the legal issue of copyright. Mr. Kato created this material after leaving Toyota and gave me permission to translate and adapt it further with some advice. To date Toyota has been remarkably kind about allowing various materials regarding its production system to disseminate. I suspect they know that application is difficult and merely studying pieces of paper don't help most companies. None the less if the company complains for some reason I will indeed remove this material from the site.

In the mean time feel free to study up on how Toyota actually teaches Standardized Work internally. If you do use any of the material follow established laws for copyright and give credit where credit is due.