



## Foreword BY SHERRIE FORD

As someone who has worked for two decades in the increasingly distressed trenches called “the shop floor,” I can say with confidence that neither training nor improvement strategies rank first in the order of operations for effectively shifting a work culture to meet competitive demand.

My work for decades has involved taking whole work cultures—management, hourly staff, any temps—through an intensive interview process designed to surface what people have lived through as employees, what changes they expect in terms of demand, competition, technology, process, and cost—and finally what changes they would make in the organization in order for it to survive and then excel.

In other words, we ask the organization (and its entire workforce) what is required for effective change to happen there. Every single person in the enterprise is asked to name those top factors (we call them “orders of operations”).

In the process of this, we gather hundreds of responses which the employees

themselves then analyze, pair, and prioritize through affinity maps and relations diagrams.

We have assisted groups through this process literally hundreds of times in the past 20 years, in every kind of industry and workplace setting. Each and every time we do, the same priorities surface in the top three slots (though terminology and exact order may vary):

- Leadership
- Communication
- Training

Interestingly, all the “usual suspects” for improving performance line up behind them, typically in this order:

- Machine Uptime
- Quality
- More Customers
- Pay and Benefits

The message is clear: What really salvages the enterprise is not what most people start out thinking. The popular improvement tools—six sigma, TPM, concurrent engineering, SPC, the work of Deming, Juran, and Crosby, theory of constraints, gainsharing, customer delight, or takt time, standard work, quick changeover, and other lean tools—all are influenced, driven, governed, strangled, and/or held hostage by leadership, communication, and training.

Note that these top three are culture-making factors, as opposed to throughput considerations. They have the power to salvage an enterprise; they determine whether or not it will respond successfully to the global threats that are closing down companies across the nation. This holds true not just in some industries but in *all* industries.

What does this have to do with *Visual Workplace—Visual Thinking*? I first heard Dr. Galsworth present her concepts at a workshop hosted by Sensormatic in Puerto Rico. As Gwendolyn presented each layer of visual thinking (which must precede visual action), it dawned on me that she has created a methodology that fuses the three culture change drivers—leadership, communication, training—into one.

Beginning with the brilliant concept of creating individual value fields—with-

out which the concept of value streams is less useful—Dr. Galsworth ignites a revolution in the culture mindset. From the individual value field, the culture revolution moves to the team level, the department level, and the enterprise level. Finally, once we have mastered our own visual answers, the revolution moves on to the level of supply chain.

Dr. Galsworth has infused a mastery of the tactics associated with Lean Manufacturing and the Japanese invasion of the 70s–90s with adult learning theory and her own blend of spiritual commentary from a lifetime of studying the meaning of life and the meaning of self. When we divorce operations management from such dimensions, we fail to lead cultures through necessary shifts.

In listening to her ideas, I realized how powerful visual solutions are, particularly the ones that people invent for themselves. I also saw that a device can stand in the place of a supervisor by visually answering questions asked on a day-to-day basis is a far more profound rationale for implementing workplace visuality than “this works for the Japanese; maybe it will work for us.” Thanks to the level of visual information they share, these devices can stand in for the team leader, for team members, and even an entire team meeting.

I know because we have begun to undertake this ourselves at Power Partners, a vertically integrated transformer manufacturer. By visually broadcasting streams of information that answer questions on every level, we see that visual information sharing triggers actions systematically around shifts, and eases information deficits that cause performance problems and stresses in the work culture.

If you follow Dr. Galsworth’s technologies of the visual workplace, you will automatically achieve improved enterprise performance. The priorities set by the work culture itself, those drawn from the relations diagrams, have proven this.

Here is one of the most compelling paragraphs in the early chapters:

*In the pre-visual workplace, everything and everyone is forced to exist within a narrow definition of their capability. The physical work environment is bereft of definition or conveyed context. There is no common purpose. It is devoid of meaning. In their sum, I call these lacks information deficits. Calculating the level of information deficits in your company is the quickest way for you to diagnose the extent to which a visual work environment is both lacking and needed.*

*And needed*—I wish I could convey the experience of watching the input of

wave after wave of employees (in mixed sessions, management as well as hourly) that hint at the desperation caused by information deficits. This does not even touch on the enormity of the barriers to trust that these gaps cause—gaps and desperation that the visual workplace is designed to address and correct on the level of each individual.

Workplace visibility starts with *the individual employee*, not with teams, though in time teams evolve and the need for traditional supervisors or foremen dissolves. By starting with the individual employee who masters his or her own value field first, the needed culture sinks deep roots and endures.

In this excellent book, Dr. Galsworth demonstrates how to build a well-informed, well-trained, and spirited work culture where performance results flow naturally. The result will mirror the elusive Toyota culture we strive to copy, a culture born out of an urgency to survive, to experiment, and to capture breakthroughs visually, operator by operator.

There are many beauties to behold in this book: the classification of types of visual devices, the eight building blocks of visual thinking, the ten doorways for creating a visual workplace, and the illustrations (both anecdotal and photographic) of each of these.

The most important lesson I gain from Dr. Galsworth's work, which is captured brilliantly in this book, is that through visual devices of many kinds, we mainline critical information from the production floor or from any place of work, without even knowing we are in dialogue with our space. Floors, walls, machines can be made to lead, tell, train.

In so doing, the number one, two, and three orders of operations for effective culture change are fulfilled. When those are in place, they govern and liberate (not hold hostage) the conditions that make dramatically improved machine uptime, quality, and material flow a reality—along with expanding market share and the promise of long-term employment stability, pay and benefits security, and prosperity for the enterprise and surrounding community.

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