Help! Our productivity growth is going down! Another four tips to boost your productivity (part 8)

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Belgium is the fourth most productive country in the world, but our productivity growth has been sputtering. In this series we present four tips each time to boost productivity in the office and on the shop floor.

In the first part of this series we discussed the productivity of Belgian companies. Productivity growth in our country has been substandard in recent years.

In order to support Belgian companies with their productivity improvements, we collected a number of tips that we will publish at regular intervals. These tips are deliberately not aimed at implementing advanced technologies, but on improvements that can be achieved with little effort.

Tip 35: Start with Kaizen

Japanese companies are champions in continuously improving their production processes. We too have, in recent years, paid quite some attention to continuous improvement or 'kaizen' in Japanese. Many companies pay lip service to this concept, but do not really go ahead with it. A missed opportunity.

The kaizen approach focuses on the implementation of many simple improvements by the employees involved. Because the improvements are relatively simple, they can also be implemented quickly. After each improvement, progress is evaluated and the next step is taken on the basis of what has been learned. These many small improvements accumulate quickly and can therefore have a major impact. The video below shows how a production process was accelerated by 400% in half an hour.

Accept marketing-cookies to watch this video. For FireFox users, disable the ‘Enhanced tracking protection’ of your browser to view this video.

Tip 36: Eliminate unnecessary procedures and forms

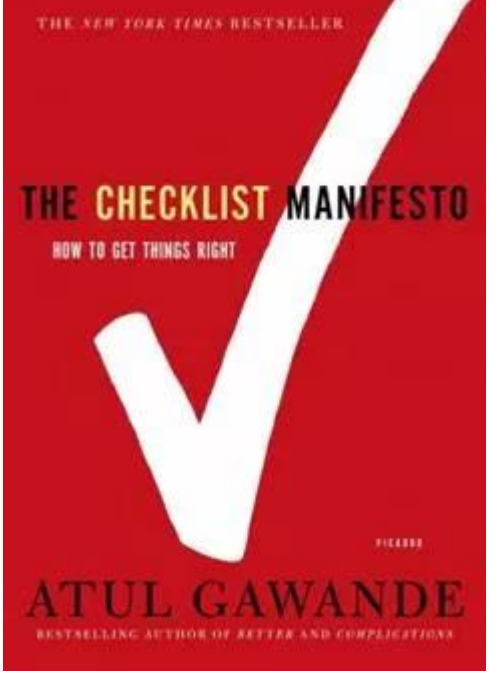


Is your attic also full of stuff you keep, but which you know you might as well part with? The same thing often happens in companies with numerous procedures and forms. Someone creates a form to follow up on something, but after a while this form is no longer necessary. Nevertheless, it is still used because the procedure requires it. We recently saw an organisation where two different departments sent quality surveys to the same customers.

So go over your company procedures and ask yourself whether they still add value, and whether this value outweighs the work it requires. If you don’t see the added value, cancel it, or limit its use to the few special cases where they may still be relevant.

'Regular' employees can also help. Although it requires some courage. Do you sometimes make reports that you suspect nobody actually reads? Just stop making it for a while. If no one notices, there is little chance that it makes sense. Are you told off because the report was not there? Feel free to put the blame on this blog.

Tip 37: Use checklists



Nothing is as unproductive and annoying as correcting mistakes. A simple remedy against human error is the use of checklists. Checklists not only protect new employees from forgetting, but also experienced and excellently trained employees can make mistakes.

Checklists have long proved their worth in aviation. For some ten years now, surgeons have also been using a checklist to avoid mistakes. The use of checklists has reduced the number of deaths and complications in surgical procedures by as much as 30%. What is striking about this surgical checklist is that many checks are very elementary. Checking, for example: Is the room sterile? Is this the right patient? Is substitution blood present? Who are the colleagues in the operating theatre? The major impact of the surgical checklist shows that there is much to be gained from avoiding basic mistakes, even when the staff is highly trained and motivated.

There are also numerous opportunities for production companies to tackle forgetfulness with checklists. A good example is checking whether all the preparatory work has been done prior to a changeover. Another example is checking whether all the necessary information is available before starting the design or work preparation.

An important point of attention when using checklists is still the way in which they are filled in. If the checklist becomes an instrument that is ticked off without thinking, the checklist loses its power. The implementation of checklists must therefore be done with due care.

An excellent source for further information is the book 'The Checklist Manifesto' by surgeon Atul Gawande.

Tip 38: Provide plants at the workplace

Plants in the workplace appear to offer numerous advantages. In environments with plants, the physical health of employees appears to improve. For example, plants lower blood pressure and reduce headaches. Plants also have a positive impact on people's emotions. In environments with plants, there is less aggressive behaviour, self-confidence increases and the working atmosphere is better. Plants also have a cognitive impact. People are better able to concentrate and are faster in cognitive tasks. One study even found that people became 12% faster in computer tasks in an environment without windows, but with plants.

How plants achieve this is still a mystery. Some researchers attribute this to the positive impact of plants on air quality (better humidity, less dust, ...).

Plants are now present in many office buildings, but they are still an exception on the factory floor. The video below from Ferrari shows that you can also integrate plants well into the factory environment.

Accept marketing-cookies to watch this video. For FireFox users, disable the 'Enhanced tracking protection' of your browser to view this video.

Finally

Do you have any tips to share? Let us know so that we can share them and become more productive together! The best tipster gets a nice gift!

Shortening lead times makes it possible to grow as a company and to reduce lots of indirect costs. The quick response manufacturing (QRM) production strategy makes this possible for companies in a high-mix, low-volume environment. From ***March (Ghent)*** *we organise a next* ***QRM training cycle*** *(in Dutch). More information is available in our agenda!*

Click ***here*** *for an overview of the other parts in the series.*

(Source pictures: https://www.pexels.com)

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