Walking your way to warehouse efficiency

Taking the time to walk around your warehouse daily could just be what's needed to make it run more efficiently. With a minimal time investment, you could be well on your way to reducing expenses and improving your overall supply chain. Plan to spend an hour a day walking the warehouse and talking to your team. Ask a lot of questions, and keep asking why, until you determine the root cause of the problem. Often, it's not the first "why" that gets you to an answer. Identify your top 5 list, picking one from each category below, and get your team engaged in helping solve the problems.

SAFETY

- When you enter the facility does it clearly indicate the corporate commitment to safety?
- Are you asked to wear any special apparel for your one-hour walk?
- Do you actively track safety metrics and regularly discuss them with your associates? Are safety committee meetings posted on the safety board and are they up to date?
- Do all the associates go through an active safety orientation prior to their first day of work? How about periodic refresher training?
- If OSHA inspectors walked in right now, would you pass the audit?

PRODUCTIVITY

- Do you have enough space to operate and maintain a safe environment?
- Is your warehouse laid out in the most efficient manner to service the needs of your customers? If it's been more than two years since engineering reviewed the design of the work within the building, it may be time.
- Do you have established productivity measurements for all areas of the warehouse?
- Are you utilizing all the tools at your disposal to maximize productivity?

CUSTOMER KPIs

- Are you currently meeting your defined metrics established for each customer you service?
- Do you hold daily meetings to discuss the metrics with your floor level associates to make them aware of how your location is performing in the eyes of the customers?
- Is there an active mechanism in place to measure the facility over time and against other facilities within the network?
- Do you have established QBRs with your customers to discuss metrics and goal achievement?
- Are you engaged in any cross-functional/cross-company teams to improve operating metrics?
- Can a random warehouse associate provide you with today's number for your number one customer KPI?

ASSOCIATE MORALE

- When you walk the building do you get a sense that people seem generally happy executing their functional role?
- Do heads shake east and west (a bad sign) vs. north and south (a good sign) when they see you approaching?
- Does your on-site leadership team spend inordinate amounts of time in their offices on conference calls?
- Does the suggestion box ever fill up?
- Are floor level associates encouraged and rewarded for speaking up and suggesting process improvements?
- Do you measure their satisfaction in a formal, anonymous manner? How often?
- Do associates understand the corporate vision and the role they play in execution?

CLEANLINESS AND ORGANIZATION

- Is your warehouse generally clean and organized?
- Do you have locations clearly identified and easily accessible?
- Do your warehouse associates know what "5S" is and how they should be using it within the warehouse?
- Would you eat lunch in the warehouse break room? Do you?

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