

# Be Productive, Be Visual

Guest was Dr. Gwendolyn D. Galsworth,  
at Visual Workplace, Inc.

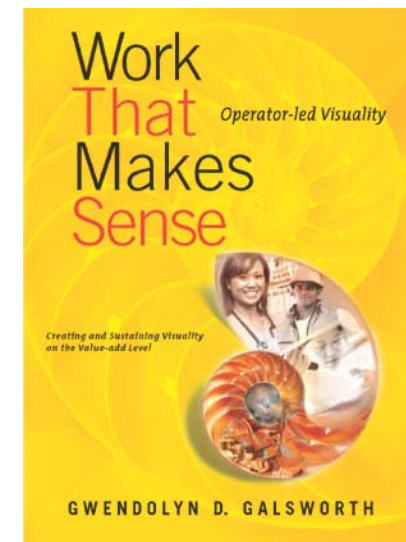
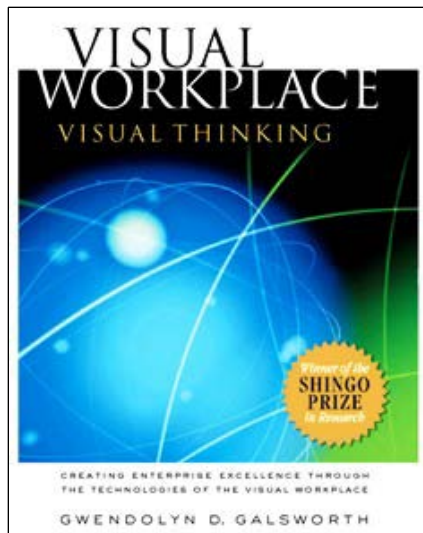


**Business901 Podcast  
Transcript**

Gwendolyn D. Galsworth, Ph.D., is an educator, implementer, and a researcher with more than 25 years in the field of Workplace Visuality. Considered by many a leading visual expert, Dr. Galsworth is the author of a number of books on organizational improvement and workplace visuality, including [Visual Workplace/Visual Thinking](#), recipient of the Shingo Prize for Research.

Dr. Galsworth established Quality Methods International (QMI) in 1991 as a consulting, training and research firm, specializing in the Visual Workplace. For the next 15 years, she worked with companies to create and proof a series of methods and formulate them into a single, sustainable framework that have come to be known as the Technologies of the Visual Workplace.

A Shingo Prize and Malcolm Baldrige Examiner, Galsworth has helped companies all over the world to accelerate their rates of transformation, strengthen cultural alignments and achieve long-term, sustainable bottom-line outcomes. Her [clients](#) include Fortune 500 companies around the world.



[Visual Workplace, Inc.](#)

**Joe Dager:** Participating in the program today is Doctor Gwendolyn D. Galsworth. She is the President and Founder of Quality Methods International, which is a training, development, and consulting firm.

She is also a Shingo Prize Examiner and author of "Visual Systems," "Smart Simple Design," and the "Visual Order Handbook," and she's a winner of the Shingo Prize in Research. Now, Gwendolyn, I have to start by asking you, were you on the board before you won your prize?

**Gwendolyn D. Galsworth:** Actually I wasn't on the board. I simply submitted one of the books, one that you haven't mentioned but I'll mention now, Visual Workplace Visual Thinking. So I submitted it for review and they thought it was fine, actually they thought it was really fine so they gave me the Shingo Prize for research for that particular book. It was an honor.

**Joe:** I think it would be harder to win it if you were on the board.

**Gwendolyn:** I think I would have been excluded.

**Joe:** Tell me, what is visual thinking?

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, I'd be happy to. Workplace Visuality is a term that was coined by a friend of mine at Rolls Royce. Workplace Visuality has to do with embedding information into the physical environment of work into the physical landscape of work and this is vital information for work.

So the information is there at your fingertips, when and as you need it. You simply pull it from the environment the way that we pull information from the roadway when we travel along. We're in a new city. We're trying to find our way. We have a map.

We don't have a GPS system; let's just say that right now. Although that's a very good visual system but let's just say that that we're depending on the roadway signs and on the indicators and on the other devices, the stoplights, the speed bumps, to get us where we're going on time and safely.

The information is built into that environment. We call that the value field, because when you're driving, really the roadway is as you drive along you're adding value. You're doing your tasks, your accomplishing your goals.

It's the same way in a work environment in a company of any kind, it could be a hospital, a factory, it could be a bank, and it could be a mine, an open pit mine. It's a workplace. And there's information that you need right now that you don't want to go into a room or even into your computer to retrieve. You need it at the point of use. Really instantly so you can act upon that information. The visual workplace is about that.

This creates many, many business benefits and equally robust cultural benefits. The visual thinking part is that when you become a visual thinker, I discovered you have to really look at your physical work a different way. You have to look at it from the point of view of what information is missing that needs to be there. You have to notice this thing, this enemy I have named it - I call it motion.

You have to notice your motion. It's one of the seven deadly ways that Toyota gave us. But I chose motion, because it's something that it's physically attached to our body. Motion is defined by Toyota as "moving without working."

So you're moving. You're getting the information you need. You're getting the work order you've misplaced. You're getting the supervisor you need. You're getting the information in order to proceed, but you're not actually doing the work. You're getting the information you need to do your work, but it's not yet work...

And visual thinking is about noticing that, noticing the information deficit, noticing your motion, and then taking the next step. This is to create visual devices that eliminate the information deficit, and therefore eliminate the motion that that deficit triggered. That's visual thinking.

It has tremendous rollup impact, because it is really living on micro level of transactions. These are micro transactions, that we barely notice ourselves, let alone others. It just looks like busyness. So that's what it is.

**Joe:** I liked your description; all the wasted motion of gathering information to do your job.

**Gwendolyn:** That's right.

**Joe:** With just that description you can apply that anywhere in the organization.

**Gwendolyn:** That's right and honestly the same visual thinking protocol or definition applies equally to the value ad level as it does to the leadership level, to the CEO level. That's why Hoshin and visual leadership is what I call it.

Visual leadership is such a robust part of your journey to excellence because, you know, I may be a GM but I've got a significant information deficit that I'm going to spend a lot of my precious time, not leading the organization, but digging up that information and it takes a toll.

It happens for managers. It happens for supervisors. This happens in marketing. It happens in shop floor operations, in maintenance, everywhere. It's simply a condition. And what's so interesting to me, and I was just writing about this last night, is that for some reason the workplace is bereft of visible information. It lacks it almost more than any other venue, which is so strange.

Because you would think it would be full of that, overflowing with information, vital information at our fingertips. It's the one venue that has the least amount of information, and yet from many points of view, we need it the most.

I mean look at the hospital. The information and all of the changes that are going on in hospitals have to do with information that is missing. It might be attribute information, on a very refined level, dosage levels or whatever, but it might be gross information, "where are the blankets?" or "When is this patient ready to be discharged?"

So it really, Visuality really has a role for every environment, and mostly the work environment. We have it in the community. We have it in the airports, and the roadways, so it's very, very interesting that it should be absent from the workplace.

**Joe:** But I associate visual thinking with the lean methodologies. Is it that way? Is that how you look at it or do you look at it a little differently?

**Gwendolyn:** Well I do see it as very closely linked. I just don't see it as the same as. And Visuality and lean, and lean thinking and visual thinking, really go hand in hand. At the same time, they're different.

The way that I see it, and I want to kind of put a disclaimer in, I started learning about lean in its previous form, JIT, and the Toyota production system, back in 1983 when I began this, when I entered the field. So I learned what I learned from Shigeo Shingo and Taiichi Ono, himself. I learned what lean was. I know the history of lean from what it was in 1983. So I think of it a little differently.

I don't think of lean as the umbrella that it has become in this day and age, I think of it more as discreet intervention and I describe that discreet intervention as a pre-determined business benefit that is implemented in order to get a predetermined cost benefit from it.

So lean has to do with cellular design and this is my history cellular design, pull, it has to do with what I call the critical path. Which is pretty close to what you might name as value stream but it has to do with identifying and streamlining, if you will, the critical path.

There are many, many tools that are attached to that, including quick change over value stream mapping, the whole set of tools that you find to support the critical path. Visual is about information and it's about adherence. What ties them together, I believe, is standard work.

Visuality is there to make sure that your standards are clarified and embedded. And standard work, as you know, is a deep, deep part of the lean information. But I take pains

and I teach it this way. I really try to speak persuasively for people to keep the two separate so they get the maximum benefit from each.

The greatest obstacle nowadays for people understanding the power of Visuality is because they have embedded visual N5S as part of Lean. But in fact, there are two different strategies. I'm talking specifically now about Visual and Lean. I think of it as two wings of a bird. Which wing is more important, the left wing or the right wing? Well, it's a silly question, but at the same time if you think of Lean and Visual -- and I do -- in that way - which is more important, information and conformance to that information; or, critical path pull, which is how I described lean. I'm looking for summary terms here, not complete terms - and there are blurry edges around both. But in general they're equal, they are partners.

And if the bird is to go where it wants to go, it may have the will but if it doesn't have both wings flapping simultaneously... And finally, it's not even going to get off the ground. So, really part of my job is to kind of set into a better balance what is visual's contribution to excellence.

And I prefer to think of the outcome as excellence - as compared to the outcome is lean. For many, many, reasons and we can have a whole separate interview on that. It's just a misnomer and by trying to stuff everything into it, like the Christmas turkey, it's just too much. Lean can't handle it.

It has in my lifetime... I've been in this field a little over 25 years. I have seen what has been a very precise intervention that is noble, and doable, and achievable; become a description of all good things.



I don't think that's what Jim Womack meant when he wrote the book; I don't think that is really what the Toyota production system uses as its guiding light. And I'm using Toyota because it's well known to be an expression of many of these high principles. I really think that Shingo Prize has the clearest description of what TPS is translated into our US culture. I really commend their principle approach...

**Joe:** Can you tell me about that principle approach, what it is...

**Gwendolyn:** You know, it's so interesting, Joe, because it's been a change. I want to suggest that you interview one of the principles, one of the head people there at the Shingo Prize, so that your audience can hear about what the Shingo Prize is doing that is I think, quite revolutionary.

And that is they are teaching and it's the way that I teach so I have a particular affection for it. They teach through principles so people are learning the principles. And even though tools are a part of it, it's really more important to understand the principle behind the tools, so that you have a wide flexibility in using those tools because you understand the principle.

For example, the principle of quick changeover can apply, which is internal, external - your internal and external steps. Making that separation and then streamlining both. That principle can be used in HR. It doesn't have to be used on a machine. It can be used in marketing. It can be used in your interface with customers. It can be used in hospitals. It can be used everywhere.

From that point of view it becomes extremely valuable, learning the principle. And that's what the Shingo Prize has done under the leadership of Bob Miller. He's come on board

about two or three years ago. He has reorganized the Shingo Prize to be principle based. But I want to give you an example of what I mean by getting too attached to the idea that we have a comprehension of lean, when it becomes all things to all people.

For example, I'll give you two very strong examples. The great companies in Japan, and I was schooled in the Japan system, so I do have that embedded, indelible in my mind. But it's because the way that the great companies, like Toyota, Matsushita and also -- sorry the name is escaping me right now -- Canon, these great companies, they are all principle driven. Their values are driving them and the principles of these tools are driving them.

They never use Kaizen Blitzes. They wouldn't think of using it. The Kaizen Blitz was reserved for the supplier chain when, for example, Toyota had to go in... It was called "Five Days and Four Nights." They didn't call it Kaizen Blitz. They would never put those two terms together since they're completely...it's an oxymoron. It's completely contradictory, with blitz is as rapidly as possible, and Kaizen meaning gradual. This is the American ingenuity has come up with this term.

**Gwendolyn:** And I was there when it was invented. I was there in Connecticut when it was invented. It was about 1991-92. So I take responsibility for my part in moving that forward. It's a very valuable form but it isn't the only form for improvement. And this was your conversation with Monsieur Valet, in a recent interview that he had.

He talked about that the Kaizen is a very close relationship between the supervisor and the operator. The supervisor sees where the operator needs a little bit of education, and brings him along on the Kaizen trail and it's a personal development of individual operators, for example, on that level.

But the Kaizen Blitz, when it was conceived of, was conceived of in Japan to service the supply chain. Where you only had a week, you had to close down the production and you had to make things happen rapidly. Those suppliers got behind it because they were single sourced to Toyota or to whomever, to Canon. They got behind the idea that they were going to be ripped apart and put back together again in a week. And they better like it if they wanted to continue to be a supplier to this great company.

But people have a real misunderstanding that Kaizen Blitzes are done in Japan routinely. The people who do them and the people who did them for Toyota were called the thugs of the Toyota production system. It's spelled T-H-U-G-S. They were the thugs. They were to go out there and make it happen by bullying it into existence.

It doesn't mean that the principles of the re-engineering that they created were not valid, but it was the speed with which it was done that was so disruptive. So there needs to be an adjustment there. And I'll tell you another story.

**Gwendolyn:** I was on a Shingo site visit in Mexico, to a really fine plant that I knew well. Part of the Delphi group. And we went into that plant. We had read the achievement report which met all of the parameters for the Shingo Prize criteria. We went to the site, specifically to validate and to verify. Make sure that what was written in the report was reflected in the living environment of the plant.

We went there and the folks made a presentation. It always begins with the site team making a presentation saying, "This is what we're about and here are some things that may have changed since you read the report. And now we're going to go on a tour." But what they presented was not what was in the report. What they presented was an

assembly line after an assembly line after an assembly line, doing work that was in cells in the report.

In the report they talked about value stream cells, these U-shaped cells. But they had removed all of the cells and recreated their assembly line. They were done with their presentation and we said, uncharacteristically. We said, "You know, you need to give us a minute. Can you come back in 10 minutes?"

The Shingo team had a conversation and said; "What the heck? How could we be so far wrong? How did we get to this site visit? This doesn't make any sense at all. They're in an assembly line. They're not even doing cellular design, which is, as you know, assumed to be a part of the Toyota production system and therefore, a part of the Shingo criteria."

We looked for that characteristic and we were wrong. They came back and we said, "You know, we're having this kind of a problem." And they said, "Oh, we understand. We had this problem, too. Except now, we see that we had made a mistake."

What happened was that after they had achieved those parameters, very, very high flying parameters. For example one of the plants made 35,000 high end radios per week and they were doing it at a phenomenal level of quality, and rate of on-time delivery, everything was perfect.

The head of Delphi, I believe his name was Brandenburg, brilliant man, genius really. He said, "You guys have met all the marks. You have filled out the profile for the production requirements to a 'T.' Now what we're going to do is a kind of 52 card pick-up. I am going to assign an ex-Toyota executive to you. I've got five of them or ten of them on the stage.

You get one, your division gets one, and just do everything he says and you're going to learn the next step."

So they met the profile for the criteria, as it was known here in the west. That particular gentleman was Sensei Yamata. It's like saying Mr. Smith here in the United States. It's a common name. Sensei Yamata said to them, "OK, You now have met all of the marks that we wanted you to in cellular design. We now want to pick up an extra 30% productivity, by putting you back into assembly lines." And that's exactly what they did.

I actually write about this in my "Visual Thinking book." It's a footnote, because I was so amazed at it. They broke the mold. They didn't care about what the profile was supposed to be. They simply knew that their next opportunity was to reconfigure into assembly lines, and pick up another -- not another 3%, another 30%. You kill for 7%.

**Gwendolyn:** There are companies with margins of 3%; they picked up another 30%. Do you see what I mean?

**Joe:** Yes.

**Gwendolyn:** It's very, very interesting. This whole field of excellence and improvement is dynamic. And even though we like to have a formula, when we have a formula based on principles as compared to tools, then we have a much greater chance of being able to be dynamic along with the reality that surrounds us. Do you see what I mean?

**Joe:** Now, relate that to visual thinking for me -- the principles to visual thinking.

**Gwendolyn:** OK. So Visuality is about embedding -- that's a great question, I love that question -- Visuality is about embedding information deeply into the process of work, so

that it becomes the work itself. The big mistake that is made -- and honestly, I understand it. It's not really a mistake; it's just a "stage along the journey."

Early in the journey to Visuality, companies will want to do the following. They will want to adopt the point solutions, the visual devices that they see in other companies, or they see in a book, or they see in a video. They want to bring it in, import it whole hog into their company.

What they get is a series of point solutions. What they don't get is a system of thinking and an expression of excellence. They don't get a new framework. It's the biggest and the earliest mistake that's made when you're making your transformation to a visual workplace.

**Joe:** It's not really a mistake, as much as it is your first step?

**Gwendolyn:** Well, I would think that...

**Joe:** Visuality is by hanging a sign up there or painting a hammer and hanging it up on a pegboard.

**Gwendolyn:** I was being forgiving before, polite, if you will, in the American sense of the word; unduly polite, in saying it's not really a mistake -- it's that first step. Let me adjust that and say, "It is where many companies begin, and it's a mistake, and it's a mistake that is very, very difficult to recover from."

So it does happen, but it is not a first step in the right direction. It's a first step because, what do we know? We don't know how to implement visual. There isn't enough discussion about it. We get 45 minutes of visual training when we learn about lean;

there's 45 minutes about 5S. And then you bring on the Andons, and you bring on the Judokas and you bring on the Poke-yokes and you bring on...and all of these are part of a single system of thinking and not just solutions.

You don't just put limit switches in place. You really think about what are the attributes that you're trying to control when you create a Poke-yoke. And when you think of it that way, you go beyond buying some limit switches for your rapid prophecies.

**Joe:** I'm going to ask you real quick, some people that's listening to this may not understand what a Poke-yoke is.

**Gwendolyn:** Poke-yoke is the Japanese term that means mistake proofing, fail-safing. I call it visual guarantees to keep it in the visual lexicon. So this mistake about bringing in point solutions is the mistake that's often difficult to recover from because it skips over the thinking. And therefore, while you'll have the signs up and you'll have work standards -- you know, you'll have visual standards. Standards that are visualized and you might have some lines and labels on the floor.

Because it's not a system of thinking, you'll exhaust those possibilities, nor will you know what to do when these devices fail. The devices are not going to be particular enough for your work environment, and that's why the thinking matters.

We go through our lives thinking. We are also fashioning. We are always fashioning our lives. We don't try to copycat somebody else's life, or if we do, as our -- using your language -- "as our first step." You know, it takes us a number of years to recover from that until we start owning our own life.

It's the same way in Visuality. Visuality has to do with the translation of information into behavior, the translation of information into exact behavior -- vital information into exact behavior. And that translation can happen kind of in buckets of understanding but the particular deviser is often peculiar.

And I spent the last 25 years understanding that -- seeing it -- working with companies who have implemented my understanding of Visuality and then seeing that bust apart because of what they really do with the principles that I teach them. It's been fabulous!

There isn't one implementation I've done that I haven't learned, in many ways, more than the clients that I am serving.

Because I am a researcher at heart, I am fascinated by this field and because they'll do things that are right for them that I've never seen before. This is the way I first saw in 1994, a double border function. Two borders sitting on top of each other that worked perfectly for one of the guys in a welding cell. But the principle of double border function served him, but taught me, "My God! We can use the same physical space for two different functions."

When I go to the airport and I look at the information that they put in the tarmac, just to make this simple transaction of, airplane gets to the gate, passengers -- the work in process -- the whip gets offloaded, and new load of whip gets on.

That transaction is now embedded in the tarmac of most of the -- certainly of the international airports but most of the commercial airports. Where the information is in the tarmac, so that this simple transaction, one of thousands upon thousands can happen before that airport -- it's fabulous! There's so much that I could...



I would like to just nail that for you with lots of other examples, but I'd have to use so many words to describe it, as compared to just...

**Joe:** How does someone start with visual thinking? I got a lot of things to think about. When I think about, I need to start with Visuality...Wow!

**Gwendolyn:** Oh yes. Great question, great question. So the methodology, and again, this is the methodology as I've constructed it over these decades. The methodology, for me, begins with these two driving questions.

Of all the questions that you answer during the day, and all the questions that you ask during the day, they all come down to two questions -- and while I'm going to say something that is not a methodology, it is an anchor point for you to understand how do you begin with Visuality.

And anyone listening can take this for themselves or for their whole company and they can get a good run out of it. You're going to have to have an implementation structure.

But these two questions, if you work them, I've used them for 10 years before their methodology became clear to me, before I saw the refinement of the process.

And the two questions are -- the first is, "What do I need to know? What do I need to know right now that I don't know in order to do my work?" That question serves me as an operator, as well as it serves you as a GM.

What do I need to know? And please notice that it says "I." This was a revelation to me. That Visuality, to reach a robust form, needs to be "I-driven." It needs to be. This is, meaning the word "I" -- like "I-You-We."

**Gwendolyn:** But it's also "I-driven."...E-Y-E. It's driven by my need to know. What do I need to know? And then what happens is that I recognize what I need to know, which is the information deficit --what we talked about at the beginning. I recognize what I need to know and I create a visual device to hold that information.

The only thing I need to do is to decide where I want to put that visual device in the physical environment. Do I want it in the upper left-hand corner of my desk, or do I want it in the upper right-hand corner? Do I want it on the wall? Do I want it over there by the door? Do I want it on the machine? Where do I want that information? Where do I want to pull that information next time I need it?

I put it in place where I need to know and you do this by multiples. So it's my "I" and it's your "I" and your eyes, the three of us, we all take care of our own eyes. We begin to build up this layer that gives us a sense of control and safety in our own work environment. And that control and safety is fundamental to being able to think about and find the next level of need. In other words, there's enough quiet in my being for me to recognize my next "need to know."

Some of these are very superficial, to begin with, like, "I need to know where my pliers are." Honestly, this we hear repeatedly, "I need to know where my pliers are. I've spent the last 45 minutes looking for them. I still don't know where they are." And when you put a shadow board, for example, do you see that the principle is "need to know need to share."

The outcome is shadow boards, when you put the shadow board place for your pliers, it honestly does not mean, as most of us know, that you're pliers will be there the next day. But what will be knowable is that you know that your pliers are missing.

**Joe:** Yes. They're not there.

**Gwendolyn:** I still have to wait for 45 minutes to get the message, "I know my pliers are missing" and do you see how that gives you that little toehold to control. How that gives you a little place of sanity? Well, you multiply that. There's a lot. When you bring Visuality and I'll get to the second question in a moment when you bring Visuality into the workplace, you will get a window on just how bad things are. Even if you have lean, how little there actually is to hold lean in place, until you have visual.

**Joe:** I saw what his Hijunka Box someone did for an office, where they had places to put the files and they were all lined up and different things. Well, when I saw that in today's world, I visualized my file structure, my computer system...

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Joe:** ...and I thought, "Wow! I wish mine was that organized in there!"

**Gwendolyn:** We're actually working with a company right now that has a massive IT project. That really has to do with standardizing the nomenclature inside of your computer system. You have to standardize nomenclature that if other people are going to find your files or even if you're going to find your files.

But also one of the things that we do in our office, and we're a kind of research and development office, so we're always producing new files, because we're always doing iterations and versions and refinements, is we number our files. We always put the top four numbers are what we're working on now, and there might be five or six files under number one. There might be five or six files under number two, they all begin with two.

We don't do alphabetical. We front load everything, we upload everything to the top and that has helped us tremendously in this office. And when we're done with the files and we take the number off, then it just goes into a different kind of file storage, it just drops down into alphabetical, but it's no longer...I mean, I use the same 12 files, 50 times a week.....and I use the odd file once a month. You know, it's being able to open my system in the morning and this is what I need to know. I need to know where the damn file is!

**Joe:** Right.

**Gwendolyn:** But the Hijunka Box that you picked up, that you talked about, is great. Because they need to know what the order of work is, what the priority is, and when does it need to be done, and so on, and it's all held there in Hijunka. And for those who are listening, who may not be familiar with Hijunka--it's a scheduling box.

I was Atemold about 10 years ago, and they had 350 Hijunka Boxes that they used to schedule every day. Every single component that needed to be made that day, not that month, but that day was already Hijunka'd. And it was amazing; the plant ran like a top like a top.

The principle was expressed by that Hijunka. They had no computer back-up system at all. It was all manual. Orders came in and went right to Hijunka. When you are at the level of a Hijunka, and especially like that, you have a system that's humming. You cannot introduce such a system when you don't have the answer to the "where" question. What the people need to know is, "Where are my tools? Where's my material? Where's my work order? What am I supposed to do now? What am I supposed to do next?" "Why did..." Yeah, the "why's." I want to keep "why" out of it, for the moment.

**Gwendolyn:** And so it's very, very complex. Operational information, production information changes quickly, and in a company that is making a transition from lean, from traditional manufacturing, traditional hospital, traditional bank, to a lean bank, lean hospital, lean factory, you have to manage the transition. You have to manage that transition.

You can't manage that without *Visuality*, because if you don't have the visual "where" in place, there is no transition. You're going down in flames. If you don't know where things are, that's the purpose of 5S. 5S is not about neat and clean. Neat and clean is a preliminary step in order to get to the place where you can put visual information in place and it won't slip off of the machine because it's so greasy or you won't be organizing the junk so you get rid of the clutter. That's the purpose of 5S.

I want to get back to this, these two questions, so we don't leave your listeners incomplete about this and wondering. "Well, well, well." So what do I need to know? What I noticed over the years is that when people were able to answer their own "I-driven" questions through visual devices that became resident in their work area, they felt a sense of safety.

But this wasn't just physical safety; this was the great goal of psychic safety. And the way that expresses itself is, "I am in control of my control of my corner of the world, I am in control." This doesn't mean fascist control, which just means, I just know what the heck is happening and I have what I need to make it happen. I'm not crazy. I am not working in this company just to pay my mortgage. I am actually making a contribution.

This is tremendous, you've been in enough workplaces to know that sometimes that's a question. So we give people, because they give it to themselves, but we offer the opportunity. This is a visual workplace. We'd like you to get involved.

We'd like you to take this question if you don't do the methodology, just take this question, "What do I need to know right now that I don't know to do my work?" Figure out what those internal questions are. Put them in a physical form, as a device. Plant that device where it's most appropriate for you, a little shadow board, right?

**Joe:** Sure.

**Gwendolyn:** A little time. A little light. Some file folders in order. And take care of your need to know. That's the first question. We put the information there. We put the device in place. We "pull" the information to us. But that's only the first of the two questions. The second question is, "What do I need to share? What do I know that other people need to know, that I need to share in order for them to do their work, or do their work better? What do I need to share?" And lots of times when I talk about this and I say, "What do I need to know?" People say, "I, I, I, I, I, ..." That's so selfish, what about teams?

Well the "team" comes in with, "What do I need to share?" And what we notice is that when people have taken care of their need to know and gain control of their corner of the world, they really do want to continue, and help others. It's spontaneous. One thing is the appetite for creating visual devices has been so delicious to them.

Because, you know, I can make this device, and I can do this and I become a master of my world of my work. I become Masterful. I'm excellent. But you know what? I'm excellent, what do I do next? I'm excellent. Period. What do I do next? I have no new mountains to climb. Ah! I can help others. And, "What do I need to share?" The question that we hear coming out of that is, "How may I help you?"

You see somebody wandering into your department, looking around, opening drawers and just kind of shuffling, and you go up and you say, "Oh, you know, Maryann, it looks like you're looking for something. Maybe can I help you in some way?"

"Oh, you know I didn't want to disturb you, but I'm looking for...what are you making next?" Or, "When is this marketing quote going out?" Or, "You know, I'm sorry to disturb you..." You know how we Americans are, we are so abject in our apologies, "Thank you, thank you," and "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

But we really don't want to, we recognize in this country that time is precious. And so we go to the next stage, what do I need to share that others need to know? It creates this level of self leadership and self management and servant leadership, altruism.

It's fantastic. It's a huge cultural change and, "Wow! People are actually changing the molecules of their personality." You're getting this big business benefit. So, you know, I mean, you can tell I'm a little bit crazy about Visuality. I think it's the cat's meow.

Perhaps that's another reason why I don't like to see it globbed into lean, but mostly it has a distinct, a very distinct contribution that gets lost if it is simply a handmaiden to lean. Perhaps that's giving you a longer answer than you were anticipating, but that's what I have to say.

**Joe:** Oh I think that was a great conversation and it was excellent. Is the word Visuality too simple for people to understand everything that there is to it? I want a visual workplace, then I listen to you talk and it seems that there so much more to it than just a visual workplace. There is such a jump from having a shadowbox to visual thinking. That transition seems very difficult for me.

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, well I've never been asked that question before, but it's a great question because it kind of expresses a kind of barrier and thinking about, just as you say, making that leap, most of us have rarely seen a fully functioning visual workplace so I am going to answer this question this way, and I hope this is not too indirect.

Many of the plants that I am invited in to assess, they invite me in because they want my approval. They want me to say, "Wowee! Zowee! This is fantastic." And I always say that. I will say that for the most meager expression of Visuality because I think it is fantastic.

It does demonstrate a beginning, as long as the beginning is based on principles and those principles will promise a longer life; the iterations, the versions, the upgrading, the streamlining, the making more powerful of the visual devices. So it's always Wowee! Zowee!

When they ask me to compare them against a more rigid standard, a standard such as, "the best visual plant that I've seen in my life, and I must say that's on a scale of one to 10 that would be your nine and 10. And they ask me, I make sure they really mean it, because I know they will be disappointed, whereas what I want them to be is excited. But say they're usually initially disappointed, it takes a very wise person to be excited about a 3.

**Gwendolyn:** When they thought they were at a 10 and I say, I will give you a generous three on this. And I say this usually just to the executive team. I say, "You have gone. You have taken a step on this journey and you've seen the benefit and you can ride along on what you have now, or you can go the distance."



You don't have to be Rocky Balboa, but you do have to enter the ring. And by entering the ring, means that you want to go further in Visuality. Visuality currently in my lexicon, there are 17 discrete methodologies. That have to do with visual controls, visual pull systems, visual metrics, visual problem solving, visual leadership (which incorporates Hoshin Kanri), policy deployment, visual order, visual displays. It is so important for supervisors to have displays to help them to make this transition from traditional to lean manufacturing.

These production control boards that give them what they need. These aren't dashboards that say, "I produce this much, and I had these many defects, I had this level of yield, " that report is for his manager. What he needs for himself is, "These materials have arrived, I am missing this material, this tooling is still out to the shop, this employee is not coming in for another two weeks."

He needs to know what his resources are against what his production schedule is and then he's got a chance. At least he's got a chance to reconfigure things so he can make it through and he's got to do it with less effort because we're lean.

You've taken everything away from me how can I meet my quotas? So getting back to the question of what happens is that company that's at three, and thinks of itself as eight or nine or well on its way. I say to these companies, I say to you "Be proud of what you've done" and if you want to enter the ring, you can go further and the business benefit will be at minimum, whether you're lean or not at 15-30 % increase in throughput.

You'll get a strengthening up employee morale, but just not on the value add level but also in maintenance and engineering because you're going to be creating these visual linkages between working the stations, between the departments.

**Gwendolyn:** For one thing, for one thing yes. And then you can move down your supply chain. So Visuality has the stature, it has equal height and I think of equal importance as the lean paradigm. And when we put it into lean and do 45 minute sessions. Of course, companies don't understand that they're not visual yet.

But we're not going to shame them about that, we're going to say, "You've done well, let's go further." Let's go further, and the way that I describe the outcome is a fully functioning, comprehensive, robust, visual lean enterprise. That's what excellence is.

It's the marriage between the two. It's robust, and it is as detailed, as visually detailed in its expression, in its outcome, and its benefit, as lean is. In its expression, it's outcome, and it's benefit. They are two wings of a bird. And you know, one of the things that you and I talked about, when we were in Cincinnati at the conference is that the greatest enemy to visual is not an enemy at all its ignorance. People simply don't know that visual can help them or their ignorance means they have a very small view of what visual is and therefore don't embrace it, don't pursue it.

Only last year, only last year did the Shingo Prize make Visuality a part of its criteria, they did it spontaneously. Of course they had sat in on some of my seminars and things so they knew it was important, but the fact that they have made Visuality a part of the criteria for achieving that level of competitiveness that's called Shingo Prize is a tremendous breakthrough and a great ally in this battle against what is just simply ignorance. People just don't know about it.

**Joe:** Where do you think Visuality is going in the workplace? And how quickly is it going there?

**Gwendolyn:** I think we get so many phone calls, emails, so many inquiries about Visuality from people over the last year. That's probably quadrupled because people are interested in our work. People are finally getting onto the fact that sustainability is synonymous with Visuality.

That if you want sustainability in your lean outcomes you better get visual. You can't get to lean without visual. You can't get there. And people are beginning to realize it because they've been on the journey for three to five years on lean and they begin to see the gains that they've had before erode.

The contribution visual makes to lean is probably 60 % of what's gorgeous about visual. But there's another 40 % that lean doesn't touch or maybe it's the reverse, maybe 40 % is the lean sustainability and 60 % is what lean can't touch, just can't touch it because it's a different lean, it's a different component of excellence.

And I think you're getting a sense of it now. I mean, how do you organize, streamline, and make elegant the micro-transactions that are really eating up your day. How do you do that? I mean, what are the principals that drive that. So let me just mention one thing about implementing so people can feel easy. I gave you a simple way. There's you know, this isn't a methodology when I said, "Need to know, need to share." It's a way for you to begin.

And so I want to say to you that classically, traditionally, and always, when we begin an implementation of visual, we always begin with a demonstration area. We never begin by splattering it across the plant or across the hospital.

We find one area; we make sure that the supervisor there is of a mind. You know, supportive, flexible, kind of on the team of change so that we don't have to deal with kind of subterfuge there and sabotage and just strange thinking. So we have a supportive supervisor.

We have a small group while we're learning, of maybe even just eight to 10, to 15 people. And we say, "OK, we're going to begin." And then we drilled, one foot wide, one mile deep. And we make that environment as visually robust as possible. We put the layers in; we do it for the operators.

Then we bring in supervisors and we give them their visual component which is mostly visual displays. And we get that cooking. And maybe even we'll have two areas, they'll be linked, maybe quality and a production area, if you're looking at a plant. And we link them. And then we start circling out. So you spend your time on your first demonstration area, and honestly most of that time is you learning how to implement. You are learning how to deal with the barriers in your own system, the crippleness of your own system.

Most of the good work that we do, by the way we are very good at Visual and implementation. We must know how to implement or we can't help other people implement. Now we're doing training of trainers. And all of the materials are very standardized.

But still when you take them to your plant, it will be as though God has not yet invented the world. You're just going to start on day one - and it's going to feel like you're in a jam that's never been seen before on the planet. That's the way it is.

And then you gained your strength and you do your second cycle, your third cycle. And by your third cycle, you should be able to replicate so you're doing, you're going from three cycles to 6, for example - from six to 12 - you just do multiples. But that first demonstration that's the only way that I've ever found that you begin, is you begin small, and deep. And that's where you're learning. Sometimes that first demonstration area is the slowest to come up.

**Joe:** You have a lot of different ways that you get the Visual workplace across to people on your Website, I mean they could take webinars you have DVDs, CDs. Different ways that they can learn about Visual Workplace. Your website is [visualworkplace.com](http://visualworkplace.com). Do you have any new products in the works? Or in the near future what's coming out?

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, thank you. Thanks for the question. Yes, the webinars are great because people can sift through them in the comfort of their own offices. And they can have five or 10 people sitting in with them and we do a series about five every, five in the fall and five in the spring. We'll start again in January, February. And those are really wonderful.

New products, I'm really glad that you asked because we have just created what's called the Visual Edge series and these are the PowerPoint, the training kits, training configurations. It's bigger than a kit, it's a training configuration that I use and that our licensees use. We have lots of licensees throughout the world that our licensees use when they do their training. Only they're not implementation suites as much as the individual modules.

So we have one on the four power levels. We have "The Building Blocks of Visuality." We have "Introduction to Visual Thinking." We have "Automatic Recall," "The Visual Wear,"

"The Five Reasons for Visuality." These are all single modules; they last about an hour and a half.

And I just love this series because it is exactly what I use when I train and exactly what we give our licensees. They come fully scripted and people can be independent and do the training themselves.

We would like them to come to a seminar to get the Gestalt, to get the overview so that they can feel the principles that are supporting them and they understand what the ultimate outcome is. But if they can't make it this will, this is I think a wonderful support.

And the other thing is. Thanks for your question, Joe. The other thing I'd like to brag about is that we're entering an alliance with out, with another company that's called Visual Workplace. They do the kind of mechanics of, they have machines that do labeling and wonderful floor products, floor markings, that last forever and very easy to remove. And we're entering an alliance with them as of January 1, 2010. This has happened rather rapidly over the last month.

But it will mean that our reach will be deeper into Visuality. And if anyone is listening, and there are many of you who know the value of Visuality. But you can't quite convince your Senior Managers because they either don't get what Visual is don't think they need it or think they already have it because they're doing Lean. As we gain strength, and I think this alliance will be part of that. And certainly with the Shingle crisis done in the last year will be part of that. They will understand where Visual fits in and they'll kind of get rabid the way I am about this stuff.

**Gwendolyn:** And you'll have. You'll have to beat them off. But they'll be with you. That's our responsibility; it's our responsibility to make it easy for you to get a yes when you say, "Let's go Visual." I want to mention one more thing from my friend at the Shingo Prize.

They asked me last year to transform my book, "Visual Workplace, Visual Thinking" into an online course. And they offer that now as part of their online curriculum. And I want to recommend it especially if you want an overview of greater depth. You just get in touch with the Shingo Prize, at [shingoprize.org](http://shingoprize.org), and they'll help you on your way.

So, we're doing better. And this interview itself is wonderful, Joe. I want to thank you very much for inviting me because we have to get the word out. Visuality... You know what? Let me say it this way. And I think this is the kind of metaphysical way of looking at what the Visuality does.

When you release, when you liberate information through Visuality, you liberate the human will. This is a huge cultural benefit. People who have been struggling with the lack of information on the minutest level are suddenly liberated from that. And suddenly, there, they want their will to align with the corporate intent.

Wow, that's what we're all looking for in cultural in the work culture. We want alignment. But people will not give you that alignment because they're in charge of their own will. They have to give their alignment until they feel safe. You know?

**Joe:** I think that's very well put. Is there any other place people can contact you up, other than or can you just direct them to your [visualworkplace.com](http://visualworkplace.com) website?

**Gwendolyn:** I think [visualworkplace.com](http://visualworkplace.com) is great. There's a link to the email and our phone numbers and things are there. And mostly I want for those of you who need the support. I want you to feel encouraged in your desire for Visuality. It is the missing link. It is an important missing component from your journey to excellence, and help is on the way.

**Joe:** I think you've been wonderful Gwendolyn. You were very engaging and I enjoyed listening to you. This will be on my website and also the podcast is available on iTunes at Business901 iTunes Store. So, thank you again, and I will look forward to hearing more from you. Thank you.

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, thank you so much, Joe. I've enjoyed it, and I appreciate it deeply. Thank you.



# Joseph T. Dager

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt

Ph: 260-438-0411

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: [jtdager@business901.com](mailto:jtdager@business901.com)

Web/Blog: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)



## **What others say:**

*In the past 20 years, Joe and I have collaborated on many difficult issues. Joe's ability to combine his expertise with "out of the box" thinking is unsurpassed. He has always delivered quickly, cost effectively and with ingenuity. A brilliant mind that is always a pleasure to work with." James R.*

Joe Dager is President of Business901, a progressive company providing direction in areas such as Lean Marketing, Product Marketing, Product Launches and Re-Launches. As a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, Business901 provides and implements marketing, project and performance planning methodologies in small businesses. The simplicity of a single flexible model will create clarity for your staff and as a result better execution. My goal is to allow you spend your time on the **need versus the plan**.

**An example of how we may work:** Business901 could start with a consulting style utilizing an individual from your organization or a virtual assistance that is well versed in our principles. We have **capabilities to plug virtually any marketing function** into your process immediately. As proficiencies develop, Business901 moves into a coach's role supporting the process as needed. The goal of implementing a system is that the processes will become a habit and not an event. Part of your marketing strategy is to learn and implement these tools.