

Exploring Lean Visual Management Techniques in Facilities Management Systems: The Case of University FM Practice

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The overall purpose of this research is to introduce the aspects of exploring the impact of implementing lean visual management techniques in order to improve customer value, efficiencies, and waste within facilities management systems, thus creating a productive and successful lean visual workplace. The case studies will investigate in house and outsourced facility management services at UK and USA university facility management departments, also known in the UK as estates and property planning. The UK University is going through a large public relations, media campaign and engaged with reinventing themselves as an international quartile university by 2017, when they will celebrate their 50 year anniversary as a chartered university. Part of the strategic plan is to transform their core business strategies and a component of the plan was envisioned with the opening of the universities MediaCityUK facility. The building is unique in that it is also open to the community, as well as the university and is the first time that the university has outsourced facility management services and leased such a high profile facility. The USA University is located downtown in a major east coast city and utilizes in house facility services and outsources some custodial services. At this point in time, the case study exploration has just started and findings are limited to literature review, background information, and a small amount of informal interviews. Within the facilities management (FM) industry the conceptualization of lean implementation is in the beginning stages of investigation and is moderately under researched. Evidence shows that lean principle implementation has been successful in manufacturing, aerospace industry, construction, healthcare sector, service industry and public sector organizations, not extensively in facility management departments or FM organizations. Though its origins grew out of the car manufacturing, lean is applicable to any service industry and administration functions where process, procedures and systems are in place. This research makes a significant contribution to the embodiment of knowledge by exploring the notion of LeanFM in outsourced and in house university facilities management systems and the proposed development of a visual management (VM) artefact that can be incorporated within typical facilities management practice. The outcome is a visual workplace that improves quality, lead times and performance targets resulting in a constant process flow of activities. Therefore, creating an efficient and successful LeanFM system that aligns visions and goals to core organization business strategies. The proposed outcome of implementing Visual Management (VM) techniques in a facilities management setting utilizing design science research has limited exploration and it is hoped that the value and originality of this empirical case study influences future research initiatives.

Key Words: Design Research, Lean Facilities Management, Systems, Universities, Visual Management