



IN THE CLASSROOM

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LAKE COUNTY MANUFACTURING ROUNDTABLE

Seekers Coffee House
9443 Mentor Avenue
Mentor, Ohio 44060-4519



Mary Ellyn Sedenik

The Lake County Manufacturing Roundtable held their monthly meeting on February 11, 2011 at the Seekers Coffee House in Mentor, Ohio. The topic discussed, **“How do your employees know what to do?”**, was led by Mary Ellyn Sedenik, a Trusted Advisor at KAVON International, Inc. and a Certified Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt.

Mary Ellyn opened the discussion by asking, *“What are work instructions?”* She offered some of the many document names organizations use when referring to work instructions, including:

- Work Instructions
- Standard Operating Procedure Manuals
- Job Aids
- Visual Work Instructions
- Standardized Work Instructions
- Job Planning
- Product Design Documents
- Technical Manuals
- User Instructions
- Policy Manuals
- Job Skills
- Training Tools
- Detailed Process Sheets
- Procedure Manuals

This ignited a discussion of how some of the companies in attendance used documents to communicate information to its employees. Since many of the companies were certified to one of the various Quality Management System standards (i.e. ISO 9001), the discussion explored the use of work instructions to answer the question of *“How”* to do something. This is a distinction between procedures, which answer the *“What, When, Where, and Why”* questions.



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Mary Ellyn offered four essential characteristics, which define **effective** work instructions.

1. **Credibility:** The document must be kept up to date and reflect the standardized best practice. Users of the document must perceive that the document adds value to the process.
2. **Clarity:** The document must be easily understood with minimal text. The use of graphics and illustrations should be used to communicate the intent instead of voluminous pages and screens. The KISS principle should be used.
3. **Convenient:** The documents must be easily accessible at the point of use whether they are in a hard copy or electronic format.
4. **Consistency:** The documents must reflect actual training and serve as a reference to reinforce what has been learned. Documents should also contain the branding of the organization and follow a consistent design, format, and layout. Local language should be used with acronyms and technical terms defined.

This initiated a discussion of how work instructions are generated. In many cases documents are generated in the office without the input of actual users. This results in either perceived or idealistic instructions, which don't necessarily reflect the current reality. Once users start to discount the value provided by the document, its use declines and eventually loses credibility and is never used.

Lastly, Mary Ellyn challenged everyone with, "*Why do we need effective work instructions at all?*" Some of the responses included:

- Its required
- To prevent guessing on the part of the users
- To communicate the right way to do something
- To ensure quality
- To prevent risky practices and promote safety
- To communicate customer requirements

The meeting came to an end at 9:00am with a few attendees hanging around for further discussions.

*KAVON International, Inc. is a business consultancy that helps clients create Value in order to attain and sustain a Competitive Advantage in the markets they serve. If your company is seeking registration or compliance to any of the Quality Management System standards such as ISO 9001, ISO/TS 16949, AS9100, ISO 17025, ISO 14001, or ISO 13485, or wants to establish a continual improvement program using Lean Six Sigma methodologies, give us a call at 888-637-9598 and let one of our **Trusted Advisors** help you with implementation and training.*