

Workflow: Operational Guidance and Execution

Toolkit 2.3

Visual Management

target audience

Managers, supervisors, and team leaders.

what it is

Most businesses and operations will measure performance, but often this is done only at a senior and central level. However, the business may not effectively include the rest of the organisation in understanding how the business as whole, and their specific area, is performing, which results in a lack of understanding, transparency, and alignment. Visual management is a best practice that provides the business and the various teams with up-to-date information and feedback which:

- Makes use of visual boards and displays which communicate performance against target.
- Defines and focuses on key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets at the department and team levels that support the priorities of the business.
- Aligns team activities and contribution with business priorities.
- Enables better decision making based on better information.

why it is important

Simply put, transparency drives accountability. In other words, employees are more likely to take ownership for achieving the best results when they:

- Understand what is most important to the business.
- Have a clear line of sight between their efforts and business success (understand the importance of their contribution).
- Realise that their team's performance is made visible for all to see.

In addition, there is significant value in going through the process of understanding which performance characteristics:

- Keep the company from going out of business entirely, i.e., market qualifiers.
- Help the business to gain market share or sell more, i.e., market winners.

Market qualifiers could be characteristics such as producing and delivering export quality fruit or, at the very least, fruit that is acceptable to local market requirements. Meeting rigorous phytosanitary standards is a non-negotiable market qualifier of staying in business.

Market winners may be more complicated to identify and achieve and could be characteristics such as producing the most desirable fruit varieties or getting produce to market at the best possible time (e.g., beating other producers by getting fruit to market early in the season or exploiting counter seasonal demand in international markets).

In short, do you and your teams know and monitor the most important areas of performance in a transparent and highly visible way?

success factors

- Start with the Strategic Objectives – The first step in making visual management work is to clearly define and articulate the strategy. All decisions about what to measure at the department and team level derive from the strategic objectives. Refer to [Toolkit 1.1 – Setting Key Strategic Objectives](#).
- Define Team-appropriate KPIs – For a KPI to be meaningful to the team, they need to understand it and directly impact it through their performance. For example, the farm may have a KPI for total annual production, but there are a lot of determining factors that impact production and that the various teams directly control, such as irrigation schedules, agrochemical application, orchard sanitation, fertiliser application etc. There should be clear line of sight between strategic objectives and team objectives. Fortunately, in citrus production cause and effect are very directly and clearly linked.
- What are the Key Numbers / Metrics? – Consider the typical car dashboard which gives the critical information at a glance (speed, cooling system, fuel tank, range, fuel consumption, and alert or warning lights). Similarly, you want to design your visual boards to provide the most important information in a simple and visually effective way.

The “dashboard” concept can be applied to farming as well. Consider the application of visual management farm teams:

- Snapshot Data – Picking volume per team per day, short interval controls such as spraying progress per hour, etc.
 - Trended Data – Weekly averages, or day by day comparisons, e.g., water use.
 - Exception Data – Warnings of significant threats, e.g., scouting and fruit dissection results, excessive fruit damage during picking.
- Start Simply and Manually – Some of the best visual displays use nothing but a whiteboard and markers. There are numerous benefits to starting simply and manually, including:
 - Flexibility – The odds are quite high that the first attempt to implement visual management will not be perfect. As employees get used to the concept, they will want to add new data, change the way that data is displayed, or eliminate data that they do not need. The beauty of a simple whiteboard and marker approach is that those changes can be made quickly.
 - Cost – The simple, manual approach is also the lower cost approach.
 - Ownership – Anyone and everyone can write on a whiteboard, which means that the responsibility for updating the data can be shared across the team. Ultimately and ideally you want teams to update their own visual scoreboards.
 - Make Visual Boards the Centrepiece of the Daily Briefings and Performance Reviews – Consider the agenda for the daily briefings and performance reviews and ask the question, “What information can be displayed visually to make those meetings more effective?”

execution steps

1. Review the strategic objectives and KPIs and develop department and team level KPIs that align with the overall strategy and are appropriate for each level.
2. Design simple visual boards to support the daily briefings and daily performance reviews.
3. Assign responsibility for updating the boards to the appropriate people.
4. Observe several daily briefings and performance reviews to determine how the visual boards are being used and solicit ideas on how to improve them.

assessment questions

Please Note: There is no minimum / maximum amount of questions you can add

1.	Has the organisation defined KPIs and targets at the department and team levels that align with overall company targets?
2.	Does the farm make effective use of visual management to communicate safety and reinforce safe work practices?
3.	Does the farm make effective use of visual management to support daily briefings and performance review meetings?
4.	Do you and/or your supervisors and teams have the information readily available to update their visual scoreboards?
5.	Are the teams able to update their respective visual scoreboards themselves?

resources

1.	Visual scoreboard example
2.	Departmental KPIs and Targets example