

OBEYA

More than just a *big room*



DEFINITION

- A Japanese term for *big room* or *great room*
- A physical space where people can congregate to share perspectives in a collaborative atmosphere, all with the common objective of creating better customer experiences
- A project management subsystem meant to link leadership aspirations and strategy with the workplace

PURPOSE / FOCUS

The main purpose of Obeya is to create a workspace, free of barriers and silos, where employees at all levels can share ideas, tackle projects, devise solutions to problems, explore opportunities, and address issues of vital interest. Obeya's bring together those things that matter to create value for the customer.

OBEYA ROOM – 10 TIPS FOR SETTING UP AND GETTING STARTED

Here are a few helpful hints to set-up your Obeya Room for success:

1. Clearly define the purpose of the room.
2. Clearly define (charter) the 'project at hand.' Post the Charter, and its sponsors, for all to see.
3. Clearly define (charter) the 'project-team.' Post the Charter, and its team members, for all to see.
4. Form follows function (purpose). Design and use of space will vary pending the use and needs of the collaborators.
5. The room must be a designated area (not a shared space) where people can move freely and respect distancing. The room must have an open floor plan with usable wall space (white board and/or suitable for posting and hanging of visuals).
6. Data is King. Data collection and data monitoring in support of the Charter is a primary activity. Make all relevant data visual, keep data timely, track Charter milestones, and translate data into meaningful before and after measures of success. Post all 'Charter-relevant' data.
7. Documents to support the Charter should be easy-to-understand and posted sequentially so they quickly tell a complete visual story
8. Always have plenty of materials on-hand like flip charts, markers, post-it notes, white board cleaner, magnets, etc.
9. Configure tables and chairs to accommodate the workspace necessary to satisfy the scope of the project and team charters. Remember, form follows function.
10. Virtual communication considerations: multiple plant/ team participation, team training, vendor participation, customer insights, et al. Access to available virtual technology (monitor(s), internet, Wi-Fi) is a value add.

OBEYA PROMOTES

Creating the time, place, and atmosphere for people (customers, employees, vendors) to come together in a single place (The Obeya Room), with a single purpose, promotes rapid PDCA, resulting in:

- greater efficiency, where silos and barriers are removed allowing for quicker and more effective solutions
- collaboration and more efficient teams where members focus not only on reporting established facts, but on how their knowledge and collective strengths support selective problem-solving
- a more structured decision-making process via real-time information and more streamlined and productive communication
- a higher-level of teamwork, where people come together and develop a strong and meaningful bond. Here, too, is the uncovering of deeper cause-and-effect relationships resulting in lasting solutions to problems
- reduced organizational complexity and improved EH&S, quality, delivery, and cost

NOTABLE QUOTE

"If you build it, he will come."

As quoted by Iowa corn farmer Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner in the 1989 movie, Field of Dreams, directed by Phil Alden Robinson



OBEYA

OBEYA IN ACTION

The Obeya concept is in use more often than we realize. Think about mission prep in the military, at Quantico, NASA, in game strategy for major sporting events, in pre-op strategy for challenging surgery, for major event planning, etc. Consider: where are examples of Obeya currently underway in your organization? Where might opportunities exist for a more focused, results-oriented approach to address specific issues?

Click below for real life examples of Obeya in action at Nike and in healthcare:

[Obeya at Nike](#)

[Obeya in Healthcare](#)

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH

- *Hialeah*, FL, where Amelia Earhart departed the US in 1937 for her ill-fated flight around the world
- ...motorists motivated to *obeya* the laws lest they end up in the joyful process of paying reasonable rates for auto repairs; or
- *Paella*, the Spanish rice, meat and shellfish dish some may recognize from the iconic, "what am I supposed to do with all this paella?" line from Estelle Costanza in Seinfeld

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Test your Obeya knowledge! Can you guess which 2 are true, and which isn't? Answers below!

1. The ultimate goal of Obeya is to create value for the customer.
2. The room used for Obeya can be a shared space.
3. Obeya allows for the removal of silos and barriers which then creates an environment conducive to collaborative, team-based idea-sharing, problem-solving and growth

Bonus round!

4. True or False: there is a National Paella Day, celebrated each March 27th

Answers
1. True
2. False – see bullet #5 under Obeya Room – 10 Tips for Setting Up
3. True
4. True. We can't make this stuff up.

