



Where are the Martini Glasses?

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Laying out your production or warehousing facility is just as important as the software application that helps you operate it. In today's day and age of "Lean Practices" one might get lost in philosophy and terminology. I'm positive that both men and women like to cook. So let us relate this to my favorite place – the kitchen.

- 1.) **Work Center:** This is an area that has similar machines or a group of people that that can be considered as one unit.
 - Stove Area with Surrounding Cabinets
 - Sink/Dishwasher Area with Surrounding Cabinets
 - Refrigerator Area with Surrounding Cabinets
 - Eating Area
 - Kitchen Door to Dining Room (That is where the Dog Must Stay-A **Work Rule**)
 - Kitchen Door Leading to the Patio/BBQ Area
 - Wish I Had a Bar – But That Is In The Future - Makes Sense for Martini Glasses

- 2.) **Work Cells:** This includes dissimilar machines and people that when combined, produce a finished good.
 - Kitchen and Cooks, Family and Friends.

- 3.) **Workplace Organization:** This includes the arrangement of tools, equipment, materials and supplies according to their frequency of use. Those items that are rarely used (such as martini glasses) should not be placed in the important and unrelated areas.

Although my home is frequently visited by friends and family, we are partial to beer and wine during special occasions. Only on New Year's Eve do we mix Martinis as a special treat. Therefore, the Martini Glasses are strategically located ... in a cabinet, rarely used high above the refrigerator. Otherwise they'd be taking up valuable shelf space.

Now think about your warehouse or production facility. When was the last time you actually looked at the layout? If your company has grown and you had materials everywhere, or wherever you could even find a place – awesome! Sales obviously did a great job. However think about it. Do you have similar items grouped together to make fulfillment easier? Do your employees take unnecessary trips or journeys to complete an order? Are your fastest moving items near your shipping docks? Are there enough materials at your work centers for today's orders?

What can you do to improve your facilities right now? You should most importantly have a software system in place that allows for Multiple Warehouses, Locations and Bins. Real-Time Data should be available to help you understand your product movement.

There is a considerable return on investment in placing products strategically within your facility. This should be scheduled and maintained on an ongoing basis, especially if you have ever-changing products or a large number of active SKUs. It makes no sense for slower moving items (Martini Glasses in my case) to take up valuable and accessible space.

If you do not have the internal resources to assist you with facility planning or maintenance, there are many Supply Chain and Facilities Consulting Groups that can be outsourced for this type of work. My suggestion is to provide as accurate information as possible to these specialists, define a clear engagement up-front with all costs clearly defined and make sure to check their references (the distribution or manufacturing clients they assisted).