What could a surgical services director learn by working in a forklift factory? A lot if the factory is in Japan and uses Lean manufacturing.

Sandra Saltzer, RN, MPA, made the trip to Japan in 2004 when she was at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. She says that because she didn’t speak the language, she had to observe the actual work process closely. She came back with new eyes for weeding out waste and involving employees in making improvements.

Saltzer is one of the surgical services managers leading Lean efforts to eliminate waste in OR processes and plant the seeds of a culture for continuous improvement among staff, managers, and physicians. Read about their efforts in this issue.