

Ensuring Your Next Kaizen Event is a Colossal Failure

Because sometimes “what not to do” can be an important lesson.

Finishers all over the United States are using Kaizen events to improve efficiency and better respond to the voice of the customer. Though some are achieving their goals, many — if not most — are failing. To ensure that your organization’s next Kaizen event is a colossal failure, follow these guidelines:

Gargantuan Scope

Set the scope—the definition of the areas the Kaizen is intended to improve—so wide that it is destined for failure before it begins. Rather than reducing the reject rate for Part A on Line 1 to five parts per million, set the scope of the Kaizen event to “eliminate rework in the entire shop.”

Goals? We Don’t Need No Goals

If we can avoid setting any specific, measureable goals for our Kaizen event, then not only will we not be able to tell if we have accomplished anything, but nobody can hold us accountable for the results.

We Don’t Need No Metrics Either

During the planning phase of the Kaizen event, rush through the part about how we currently measure and monitor our performance. Don’t fritter away time questioning whether we measure the aspects that are most important to our success.



Outlaw the Suits

By all means, keep the pretty boys in the front office out of the Kaizen event. The last thing we need when trying to improve our business is for the executive leadership team to support our initiatives. They are not a necessary element of building a lean culture anyway.

Suppliers Keep Out

How could an individual who has visited hundreds of companies like ours and seen the benefits of other organizations’ Kaizen events understand our materials, knows our equipment, is familiar with our processes and has a vested interest in our company’s success possibly benefit our Kaizen event?

Forbid Machine Operators from Participating

What would some person on the shop floor who has worked here for 20 years and knows her piece of equipment as well as she knows her own family actually be able to tell us about improving our business? Newbies Know Nothing – The operator we just hired from another finishing company hasn’t been here long enough to possibly offer any input of value, so just ignore his suggestions.

Exclude All but the Manufacturing Team

The accounting manager knows numbers, the buyer knows how to negotiate a supply agreement, the director of sales understands business development, the shipping and receiving manager is an expert on bills of lading, but they know nothing about manufacturing, would not learn anything by participating in the Kaizen event and certainly couldn’t provide any input of value.

Choose a Closed-Minded Facilitator

A patient facilitator (Kaizen events have no leaders) who takes time to encourage, cultivate and explore improvement suggestions from all members of the team and perhaps even pulls a single solution out of multiple suggestions will only waste our time. Instead, we need an iron-fisted, imposing leader who believes everything has already been tried and the way we do it now is the best way.

The Boss is the Boss

Make sure that executives, supervisors and other business leaders know that their job is to dominate discussions and to insist that any changes are implemented their way. Any notion that “there is

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no hierarchy in a Kaizen event” or that anybody can challenge anyone else’s ideas is absurd.

Everyone Knows What a Kaizen Event Is

The meaning of words like Kaizen, current state, future state, mura and muda are fundamentally obvious to just about every American, so why would we waste any time educating the team about what a Kaizen event is before the event begins?

Capital before Creativity

Why do simple things like changing workflow or error-proofing a shipping process when we can blow thousands of dollars on a new software package or piece of equipment?

Waste No Time on “Low Hanging Fruit”

Those inexpensive, simple and quick-to-implement ideas that flow out of the Kaizen process are way too basic to be worthy of our Kaizen event. Put them at the bottom of the list and instead attempt to implement the bodacious, costly and complex projects.

Demand Agreement

When the time comes to narrow down the list of improvement opportunities that result from our brainstorming phase, never mind that every member of the team agrees that certain ideas are improvements to the current way of doing things. Waste time and bog the team down arguing about which suggestions are the best, and don’t move ahead until everyone is in complete agreement.

Quit at the Finish Line

Once the Kaizen event is complete and the improvements are implemented don’t bother checking back at regular intervals to ensure that they are still in place and meeting their intended results.

Are you at a loss for how to fail in your next Kaizen event, or are you looking for ways to improve your chances of success? The list above should prove helpful either way. ■

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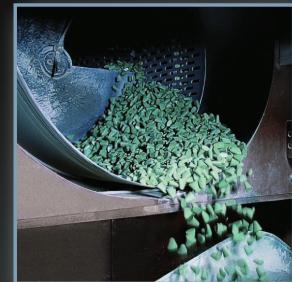
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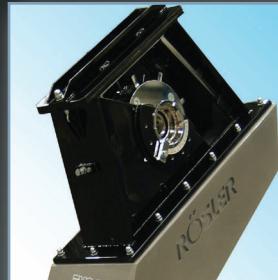
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