

1%
better
every day



How Small and Simple Actions
Every Day Lead To Big Results

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Introduction



How do you go about changing your life?

Do you do it overnight?

The answer, hopefully, is obviously a resounding “no!”

Changing even a single aspect of your life takes time, dedication, and effort. Humans are creatures of habit, and once those habits have become deeply ingrained into our psyche. This is a *physical* phenomenon that can actually be witnessed within the brain. We’ll get to that later in this book.

And yet despite many of us knowing all this intuitively, we still seem to think that we can make huge changes to our lives on a

whim. If you've ever told yourself that you are going to "start a new training program tomorrow" that involves going to the gym four times a week and eating half your current caloric intake... well then you're guilty.

There is a better solution. It's called Kaizen. This is the Sino-Japanese word for "improvement" and it has adapted to represent a specific approach to improvement. One where you make tiny improvements, take tiny steps, toward the goal that you are working towards.

As the old saying goes: even the longest journey starts with a single step.

And what is a thousand mile hike other than lots of *single steps*?

When you look at challenges this way, anything becomes achievable.

In this book, you will learn how to take this concept and squeeze it for everything it is worth. Whether it's your relationships, your fitness, your health, your business, or anything else you are looking to improve; Kaizen will help you to get there.

Get ready to change your life for the better.

Starting with just a single step.

Chapter 1: Why We Need Kaizen



Before we get into the nitty gritty of what Kaizen is and why it works, let's first consider the alternative and why it's so important.

As mentioned in the brief introduction, the approach many of us impulsively make toward self-betterment, is to try and change everything all at once. That example of starting a new training program where you train four times a week and cut your caloric intake is one that a lot of people can relate to. Perhaps you have done something similar yourself?

The only problem, is that this kind of approach completely misunderstands human psychology, and the reality of our lifestyles.

Think about it. If you are currently out of shape, then it's probably because you aren't working out enough, and because you aren't eating right.

But why is that the case? Chances are, it's because you're currently too tired and too demotivated to do those things.

Probably you come home in the evening and you feel *absolutely exhausted*. You just don't have the energy or the will power to exercise, and that's completely understandable.

And so you expect to now all of a sudden *pull this kind of energy out of nowhere*? You think you can go from being too tired to work out *at all* and to being able to work out four times a week?

And let's break down what that actually means for a moment.

It means coming home from work and then getting changed into your gym clothes. You'll then need to drive to the gym in the cold, shower after your workout and get changed, then drive home. Then get your stuff ready for the *next* workout.

So that one workout actually takes more like two hours, which means you're dedicating a whole new 8 hours to your new regime.

You realise that's an entire working day? Including lunch?

You're going from NOTHING to 8 HOURS?

Can you see the problem here?

Meanwhile, you're also expecting yourself to go out in the cold. You're expecting yourself to be organized the night before. You're expecting yourself to run and sweat in front of strangers, and to miss out on your favorite TV.

You're not trying to learn one new habit, but rather learn a whole *bunch* of new habits. While at the same time *unlearning* a bunch of *other* habits.

And that's not all. Now that you're burning 8 hours of extra energy, you are also planning on eating 500 fewer calories? You're going to work twice as hard, while taking in half the amount of energy.

This is looking like a great plan.

The Neuroscience

As though this wasn't already enough of a challenge, what you probably don't realize is just how much your neuroscience is working AGAINST you in a situation like this.

Our brains are highly plastic. That means they are adaptable to change and can *physically* restructure themselves according to

our behaviors. You might think that would be good news when trying to form new habits or lose old ones.

But in fact, it also works against us. That's because the brain adapts *hard* to repeated stimuli. The brain adapts and changes shape according to a very simple rule: neurons that fire together, wire together. So if you repeatedly do one thing followed by another, then those two experiences become linked in the brain over time.

And each time you do those things together subsequently, you further reinforce and strengthen that link. The connections become myelinated, meaning that the tendrils are insulated and signals travel faster down them. They grow more nodes at the connection points.

Eventually, it gets to the point where you no longer have to think about the association. Doing A automatically triggers B. Changing this takes a HUGE amount of work, and in some cases is nigh impossible.

So to attempt to make this kind of wholesale change across multiple different habits all in one go... well it's somewhat futile.

That's where Kaizen comes in. And it's why this is such a powerful and transformative tool. In the next chapter, you'll learn more about it and how to put it to maximum use.

How it Happens

At this point, you might now be wondering how this happens. When you lay it all out like that, it appears *obvious* that making gigantic changes to your routine would never be effective. If that's true then, why do we *still* spend our time determining that we're going to "change our lives starting tomorrow."

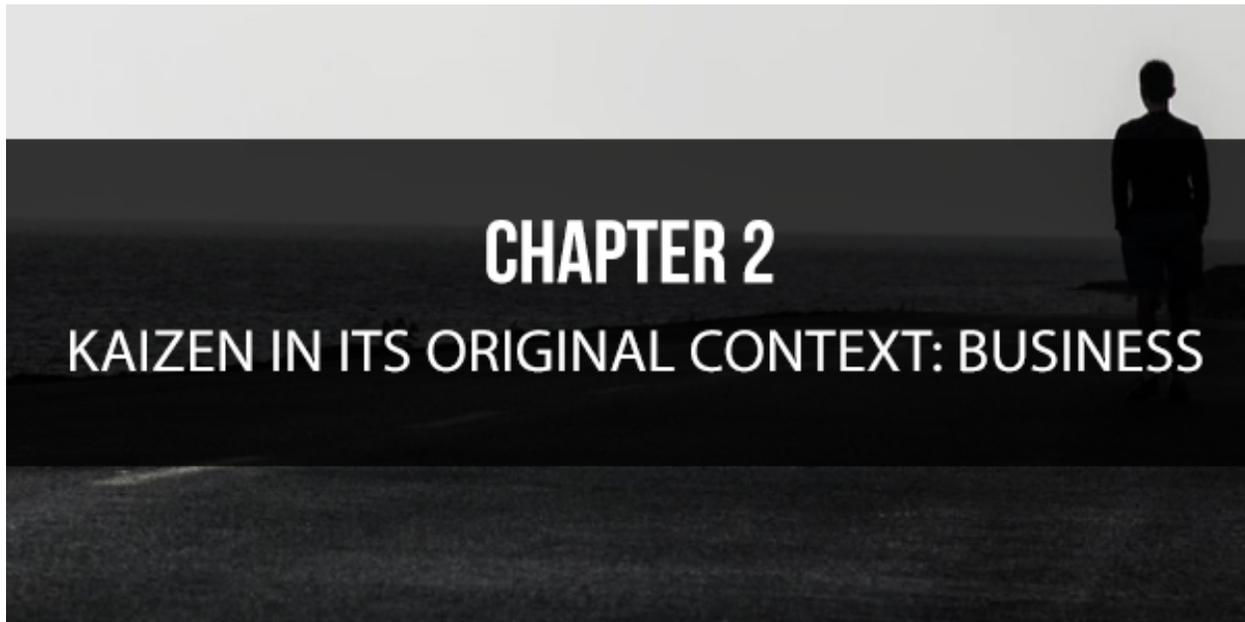
There are a few reasons. The first is that it's simply that much more appealing. Nobody likes the prospect of hard work, or of something taking a huge amount of time.

On the other hand, the idea that "everything can change" in a single day is *immensely* gratifying. And so it should come as no huge surprise that we can get caught up in this notion.

The other issue facing us is the media. Because of course, it makes a whole lot of sense for advertising agencies to *want* us to take a more one-and-done approach to our self-transformation. Gyms want to sell gym memberships. They do that by telling us that we need to go *all in* or go home. They tell us that we should buy all the workout equipment, the expensive protein shake, the year-long membership.

Then of course what comes next is that we feel guilty watching the money come out of our accounts every month. While we get no fitter or stronger...

Chapter 2: Kaizen in its Original Context: Business



Kaizen is a term that has very much been adopted by the self-improvement crowd and that is popular among everyone who hopes to become happier, fitter, wealthier, and wiser. But it began like as a business term, and understanding its routes in this way can go a long way to helping us grasp the concept and better apply it to our own lives.

And if you happen to run a business, then of course you'll find all of this useful for its own merits.

The Origin of Kaizen

The word kaizen means “improvement” or “change for the better” in Japanese. However, the term is used more specifically to refer to *continuous* improvement, or small changes.

The term Kaizen first adopted this meaning in the world of business. This was especially pertaining to the methodologies of car manufacturer Toyota, initially. The strategy has been successfully adapted to business for many organizations, and later to the self-improvement field. The book *Toyota Way* explains the use of Kaizen in detail and has canonized its usage to some extent.

That said, the self-improvement crowd has also somewhat applied a little artistic license to the way it uses kaizen. In many ways, self-help books tend to oversimplify Kaizen, while others misinterpret some of the core concepts.

Kaizen is all amount focussing on the minutiae. On making small changes that add up to big differences. But whereas many self-help books tell you that this translates to “flossing your teeth” a little every day to ingrain new habits, that isn’t actually anything to do with the original meaning of the word.

That isn’t to say that this advice doesn’t have merit. We will be discussing all types of kaizen in this book, but by addressing the

strictest business interpretation first, we'll also understand the "official" version – which just so happens to also be *extremely* powerful and often overlooked.

Types of Kaizen

In business, in its original context, Kaizen has been generally broken down into two separate terms:

- Flow kaizen
- Process kaizen

In flow kaizen, the approach looks at a "value stream." This might be a whole work flow, in which the organization can look for different opportunities to improve the process.

If you imagine a large production line that involves several stages. While making a tiny change at each step of the way won't seem to have a big impact on its own, when taken as a whole, all those tiny improvements can potentially have a *huge* result.

Process kaizen on the other hand is the "concentrated improvement of a single process." That means looking at one step and making constant small improvements to get it to the point where it is the best it can be.

Kaizen is often described as being "bottom up," meaning that you start by looking at the most fundamental levels and making small

changes there. You can potentially improve every aspect of your business by cleaning the floors. Why? Because cleaner floors mean fewer accidents and happier staff. That leads to more efficient storage and retrieval. That leads to more funds left over, and happier customers. That leads to more moral and more R&D. The result is better products, and a better brand image.

Simplify and Eliminate Waste



Moreover, Kaizen is also about looking to eliminate waste.

In any given process, there is almost always “waste” that can be eliminated. By getting rid of these errors, you can significantly

increase the speed of a process. This can have huge and transformational changes for a business.

Let's imagine for a moment that you are someone who writes articles for a big blog and uploads them to WordPress every day (WordPress being an online publishing platform). When you upload the article, you need to add images and formatting like bolding and headers etc.

So your current workflow looks like this:

- You write your article
- You read through your work and check for typos
- You upload the article to WordPress
- You read through your work and upload images and add formatting

What's wrong with this? Well nothing on the face of it, except that by taking this approach, you're not working in the most efficient way possible. That's because you're currently reading through everything you wrote *twice*. That's once to make sure that it is spelled correctly and once to add images.

So why not:

- Write the article
- Upload it to WordPress

- Read through it and fix typos while formatting

This has effectively combined two steps into one step that will take slightly longer than either on its own, but will be much quicker than doing both. And that in turn can potentially save you a large amount of time and effort in the long run.

Let's say this saves you 10 minutes per article, and that you upload 10 articles per day. That's 100 minutes back and perhaps this now means you can afford to upload an additional article? If so, you might now be able to earn an extra \$30 a day.

As a sole trader, you might use Kaizen therefore to earn an extra \$30 every single day without increasing your rates, working harder, or otherwise changing anything about your business!

And kaizen is always relentless. Because there's still probably waste here.

What if you could remove the time spent uploading by writing *directly* into WordPress? And what if you batched all of your proofing and formatting together? Could that save you more time?

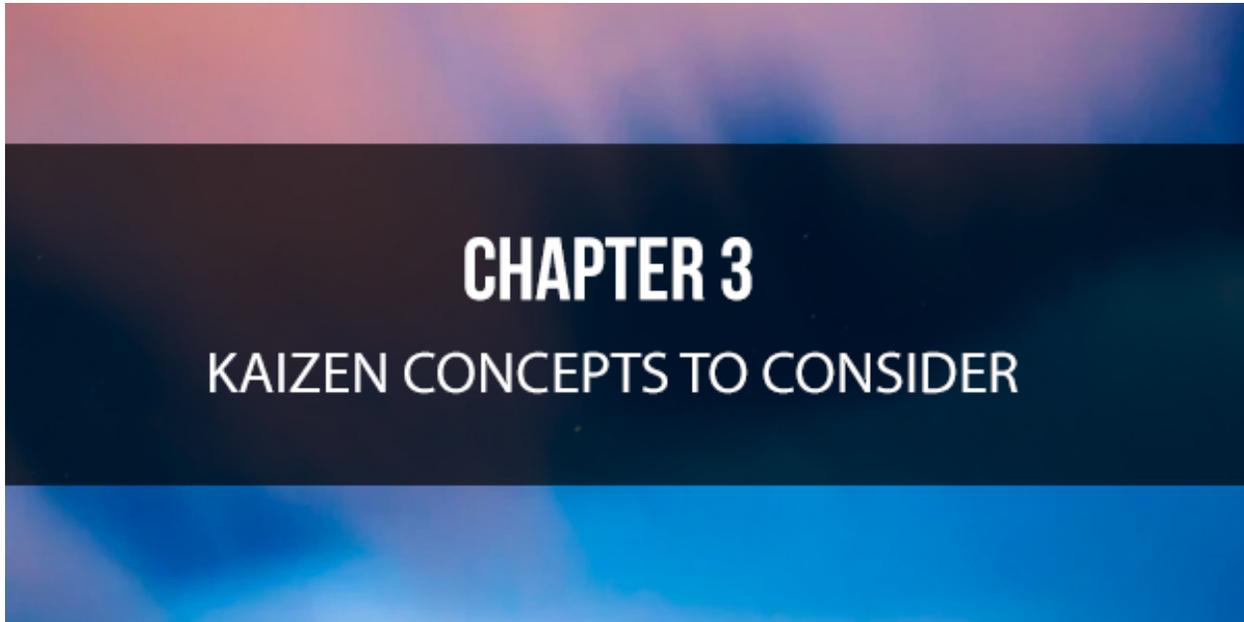
Kaizen is constantly looking for waste like this and opportunities to streamline and improve flows and processes.

Here are a few examples of types of "waste" that a Kaizen practitioner might look for in a typical business:

- Defects – Poor copies, mistakes, errors
- Excess processing – Repairs
- Overproduction – Overestimating demand
- Waiting – Waiting for the next step in the chain to become ready
- Inventory – Waiting on stock/supplies/materials
- Transportation – Time spent transporting people or goods
- Moving – Excessive movement of machines or people
- Non-utilized talent – Utilizing skilled workers in a non-skilled capacity

While this type of kaizen might seem less obviously applicable to your personal life, the truth is that it can be immensely powerful if you look at your *own* processes.

Chapter 3: Kaizen Concepts to Consider



Kaizen gets even more powerful when you consider the power of some additional concepts in business. These are **force multipliers** and **automation**. This can *also* apply to our personal lives, as we will see going forward.

Force Multipliers: A force multiplier is a fancy term for any tool that allows you to get more done in less time or with less effort. The obvious example of a force multiplier is a hammer which allows you to hammer more nails more easily than you ever could with your fist. However, in business almost anything can be considered a force multiplier such as a computer or a piece of software *running* on a computer. The same goes for a forklift truck, which allows a single employee to move significantly more palettes.

Used wisely these can save you a lot of money and greatly increase your output. *Personal MBA* author Josh Kauffman explains the merits and importance of force-multipliers, but also explains their potential risks and downfalls. While a force multiplier will amplify your productive output, it *also* amplifies the potential errors. This is why Kaizen becomes important, the more efficient your system, the more scalable it will be. It's also why it's so important to build your business right the first time, so that it is sustainable as it grows.

Think of this like throwing a ball. If you throw a ball with just slightly the wrong trajectory, then it won't hit its target. Even a fraction of an angle over a great distance adds up to a *large* deviation.

Thinking in terms of force multipliers allows us to potential increase productivity and output without increasing overheads or time. Before hiring extra members of staff, ask whether you could implement a system to help the same team accomplish more, more quickly.

Automation: Automation is of course the process of automating some aspect of your business process whether that be the production or the marketing – and it is the logical progression from force multiplication. This will often mean using a piece of software or a manufacturing tool in order to produce something with little to no human interaction. Again the same risk applies

though – as there is huge danger associated with *automating* an error. Greater monitoring and observation is critical.



When looking to expand operations, looking for ways to automate aspects of your service is a good strategy. A smart businessman or woman should always be looking for ways to make *themselves* obsolete – which means keeping an eye on the future. As well as giving you a method for increasing output, novel automation can also be used as a way to *productize* a service. How can you offer a service and remove the need for human involvement?

WordPress is a perfect example of this – Matt Mullenweg and

crew successfully managed to *automate* the process of building a website, turning a service into a product.

The 5S of Kaizen

In business, we say that there are 5 'S' words for Kaizen. 5S itself has in fact grown to become something of a shorthand in business.

So what are the 5S? Well, they are:

Seiri/Sorting: This means that you keep your work in the designated area and keep it organized.

Seiton/Systematic Arrangement: This means that you arrange your items in the optimum manner for efficient retrieval. This is extremely important for logistics and storage businesses for instance, and we see it in valet parking also!

Seiso/Shining: This means cleaning the work place and all equipment. This can reduce errors further down the line.

Seiketsu/Standardizing: This means using standard processes that can be repeated, tested, and fixed.

Shitsuke/Sustaining: This means that you must maintain adherence to the previous four S.

While this system was originally designed for manufacturing once again, it can work just as well in any other type of business OR many aspects of your personal life.

The Opposite of Kaizen: Kaikaku

While Kaizen can be immensely powerful when applied correctly, it also isn't the right fit for *every* situation. Every now and then, a process or a flow are beyond salvation. This is when a situation calls for Kaikaku, or *drastic change*.

As you might have guessed, this means throwing the old process out of the window and starting all over again. You will find that massive change like this often meets with great psychological resistance. But it's important that you only stick to a process or flow for the right reasons: and that does not include nostalgia or sentimentality!

In other words, if you've been working on a website for the last 5 years and it simply isn't gaining any traction, then you might need to completely rethink your strategy, or you might even need to scrap the website and start again.

The longer you keep a failed project going, the more energy, money, and resources you will sink with it. One of the key aspects of successful kaizen is knowing the difference: when it's time for kaikaku and when it's time for kaizen.

Chapter 4: Kaizen for Getting Into Shape – Health and Fitness



Okay, so far we have looked at a whole lot of theory regarding kaizen. We've seen how it works in business and manufacturing where it started, but now it's time to address how it can work in our personal lives – to see the theory in action.

We begin by looking at Kaizen as it applies to working out.

Microworkouts



The most obvious way to apply the concept of “small changes every day” to health and fitness, is to try and employ the idea of the “microworkout.” This means that you will be exercising for just a couple of minutes each day to begin with. This then has numerous advantages: it makes the prospect of workout far less daunting, it means committing to a much smaller challenge while your energy levels are low, and it means forming a new habit.

So let’s say that instead of going to the gym four times a week and eating 500 fewer calories a day, you instead commit to doing 20 press ups every morning and skipping your morning latte.

So now you're exercising a little bit every day, which *will* have some benefit. At the very least, it will get your blood pumping, and it will tone your muscle slightly.

What's more, is that you will begin to form that new habit.

FUN FACT: Many people believe it takes 30 days to form a new habit BUT it actually takes closer to 66 days according to the most recent research. In one study published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, researcher Philippa Lally looked at the habits of 96 people over 12 weeks. Each person chose one new habit to try for 12 weeks and reported each day on whether they successfully stuck to the new habit. After analyzing the data, it was concluded that it took 66 days for new successful habits to form – though this was greatly dependent on the individual. In some cases, it took between 18-254 days for the new habit to form.

However long it takes, the idea is that once you've been partaking in a particular behavior for long enough – say 66 days – it's then easier to build off of that. So you're now someone who does 20 press ups in the morning. Much easier to go from that to someone who does 50 press ups, rather than to try for 50 right away.

Likewise, once you're used to living off of 50 calories less in your latte, it might become easier to start dropping other sources of calories from other areas of your life.

True Kaizen and Getting Into Shape



So, is this true kaizen?

Not really.

There is definitely value in the concept of the microworkout. There is also definite benefit to trying to cut calories here and there from your routine.

But really, kaizen for fitness should mean looking at your *entire* routine and assessing what about it is making you unfit.

Cutting that latte is a good start. But perhaps you also look for other small changes you can make to reduce your caloric intake.

And moreover, you might also start looking for other reasons in your current routine that might be preventing you from training or from eating right. In other words, you're going to look at your entire lifestyle and routine as one giant "flow" or "process" and then attempt to make improvements.

So you want to get into shape, but you can't quite motivate yourself to do it. The problem is not physical, it's psychological. But how do you go about breaking bad habits and getting yourself into the gym *despite* those reservations?

Well first of all we need to assess what each of the psychological and situational blocks are that are stopping you from achieving your goals, and then we need to look at how to eliminate them. This will work for fitness, but it will also work for many other areas of your life if you apply the same principles.

The key thing to recognize here, is that energy is a finite resource, as is time. You can't keep adding more things to your routine and expect to get into shape. You're probably burned out and perhaps a little stressed or even depressed – *that* is why you're not in shape.

If you want to improve your health, then you need to look at ways to make your day more efficient so that you'll have more opportunity to improve your health in other ways.

Powerful Changes For Improving Fitness

What Can Go?

First, ask yourself “what can go?” If you're currently using all your energy by the end of the day/week, then look at your current routine and ask what you can cut out. It might be something simple: maybe you could stop going to the pub on Sundays? Or maybe it's something that requires a little more organization: perhaps you could speak with your employer about working from home one day a week? This could save you a HUGE amount of energy.

Even something small – like getting a dishwasher so you aren't washing plates any more – can potentially save you a lot of energy to then be used exercising.

Don't keep trying to add *in* to your life. Ask what you can cut out!

Where To Fit It In?

Remember in our example that switching the order of events when uploading articles could save us countless hours and lots of money? The same is often true for exercise.

So ask: when is the best time for you to exercise? Keep in mind factors like showering. If you exercise in the morning before your shower, then you are not adding extra time by showering as well.

Alternatively, you might find that working out on your lunch break at work works well for you – because you’ve eliminated the need for travel.

Here again, we’re looking to reduce “waste” in the form of movement, or “non-utilized talent” (that’s you!).

More Small Fixes

But there are probably more small fixes you can make in this efficient mindset too. For instance, ask yourself how many calories you are currently burning in a day. It may well be that you are like many people and you hardly move in a given day! Wearing a fitness tracker or step counter can bring this to stark light.

If you work at a computer, drive or get the train to work, and don’t engage in physical activity in the evening, then of course you aren’t going to lose lots of weight during the day. Meanwhile, your body won’t be adapted to an active lifestyle.

So the “way in” – the way to start fixing that – is to look at this routine and to find opportunities to improve it by adding small amounts of exercise. That means walking to the bus stop or

getting off a stop early. It might mean using a standing desk to check your emails, or it might mean going for a very light walk at lunch.

These small changes add up to bigger effects, but what's more is that they force adaptations in your body. And from your perspective, your day will look very similar because you have fitted the movement into your day in logical ways.

The Takehome

The takehome is this: if you're out of shape right now, that's probably *symptomatic* of an overly busy and overly stressful routine. That means your lifestyle is probably inefficient, and there are likely things you can do to win back time, energy, and vigor. At the very least, you can find smarter ways to fit the new things in that you want to do.

This is an entirely different way to go about getting into shape, and it is FAR more effective.

Chapter 5: Kaizen for Personal Finance



One area that lends itself particularly well to the kaizen approach, is personal finance. If you want to get rich, then you can do so by using a kaizen approach and making lots of process fixes to your personal spending.

And no, that doesn't mean randomly cutting lattes out of your routine (wow, lattes seem to be the route of all evil!).

This starts by accurately and dispassionately creating a budget that accurately reflects the cash you have available and how much you want to save/spend.

Creating a More Efficient Budget



Let me guess – every year, or every few months even, you come up with a budget that you intend to stick to and that you expect to help you get back on top of your finances. You limit how much you are going to spend on food, on going out and on gifts for yourself, and you make a concerted effort not to go above these figures.

For the first few days this probably works just fine, but then a few days *later* you find unexpected expenses coming up and catching you out and you find the money quickly racking up. Before you

know it you've forgotten all about your budget and by the end of the month you've spent just as much as normal.

Don't feel bad: you're not unusual. In fact, you're much like the majority of everyone else on the planet. That doesn't of course though mean that it's not a problem and not one you need to solve though. So here are some tips to help you come up with a budget that you will actually stick to.

Monitor and Improve

Last time you wrote down how much you could spend on food did you just pluck this figure out of the air? Most people do, and surprise surprise it doesn't work. If you are going to come up with a budget that can actually work then you need to think about the how not just the how much, and that means tracking your spending and then thinking about how much you can spend and how much you can realistically reduce that amount by. Don't just think that you are going to spend \$20 less a week on shopping, but think about how you could do this – by buying cheaper milk or by eating out only once every other week for instance.

What's important here is that you are working toward a goal, rather than simply making random assertions about how you're going to spend your money. This will then let you assess your accounts honestly and make smart decisions to achieve that goal. You'll almost always find that there are small changes you can

make to your spending to make big impacts, but you won't be able to do that until you have a concrete visualization of your income and outgoings.

Plan for the Unexpected

The problem with a budget is that it can't help you when you find yourself losing your rail card and having to buy a new one, or when you lose a tenner. The solution is to simply account for these "unexpected" (you really *should* have learned to expect them by now) problems by having a buffer of \$20 or so on each budget. In fact, over time you can assess just how much you lose to "unexpected" losses and then take an average of that number.

Limit Your Cash Flow

One easy way to stop yourself over spending is to simply limit the amount that goes into your current account. Don't spend money out of the account you get paid into, but rather just set up a standing order and have a certain amount of your pay packet transferred to *another* account with no overdraft that you can use for shopping etc. This will only be as much as your budget (and you can keep what's left over for next month) meaning that you can't go over the amount you're trying to spend and meaning that you don't actually have to write everything you've spent down somewhere to make sure you aren't going over. You'll know if you go over because your card will stop working.

This is an example of automation. And you can likewise automate the transfer of money from one account to another. But remember that automation while powerful, can also be dangerous if you make mistakes. That's why it's so important to hone the efficiency of your personal financial system BEFORE you set up automatic transfers.

Make Rewards

Notice how you get better at budgeting when you're saving towards something? Well you can mimic this effect all year long if you give yourself little rewards for budgeting well – if there's a gadget you want for instance then say that you can only have it if you save a certain amount by the end of the month. A little added motivation can make a big difference, so work this into your budget and you might find you're a little more inclined to stick with it. The great thing about money is that the rewards can be fun!

Use Apps

Pro Tip: there are plenty of apps out there that will let you visualize the spending from all your accounts at once, and then provide you with smart, actionable advice. This can be really helpful when trying to keep track of complicated spending across multiple accounts and cards. One good example is Emma for iOS (<https://emma-app.com/>). This app can show your spending across most major banks and creditors, and break that down into

useful categories (such as personal care, eating out, charity, business etc.). It even includes PayPal. This can be immensely useful for quickly setting realistic targets and seeing areas for micro-improvements!

You'll be able to quickly see where a lot of your money is being spent and add restrictions there, and you'll be warned when you start to go outside of your budget.

The Takehome

Kaizen is once again about making small, easy changes to your routine. But the most important part is being smart about it: accurately outlining your spending and then making changes that will have a large impact on your finances over time. Kaizen is about efficiency and cutting waste!

Chapter 6: Kaizen for Productivity and Business



Kaizen was originally designed for use in manufacturing, and so it should come as no big surprise that it is an ideal tool for improving your productivity and your efficiency in business.

Instead of provide a list of specific changes you can make here though (which will be different for each person reading anyway), I will instead outline a way to assess your current workflow and then alter it for the better.

Find the Sticking Points



The aim is to remove wasted time and energy in your productive day. To do that, you should start by making a note of all the tasks that you complete regularly in a day. This should include everything from booting up the computer, to arranging files, to actually getting down and dirty with your coding/design work/dealing with clients.

You're then going to assess how long each of these "blocks" of activity takes, and whether or not it could be made quicker. Remember, simply helping your computer boot up that little bit faster can potentially save you 10 minutes a day, which translates

to nearly an hour every week. Even making tea can take 15 minutes from your day easily, which adds up to one and a quarter hours a week!

Now you've identified all these issues, the next trick is to find ways to make each of these tasks faster, or more efficient – if you can't eliminate them altogether that is! A few tweaks like this and you can suddenly find yourself with five extra hours a day to play with!

Sticking to Your New Rules and Avoiding Errors With Checklists and Flow Charts

But how do you make sure you actually maintain these new productivity rules? How do you avoid letting mistakes and errors creep in that will take up more time? One answer might be to use checklists and flow charts.

In one study looking at the effectiveness of doctors and nurses, it was found that doctors would be far less liable to make serious mistakes (as would surgeons) when presented with a checklist by the nurses. This was an idea that many doctors were resistant to at first – seeing it as them being “checked up on” and constantly monitored when they considered themselves capable of working alone. In fact though, even the most experienced doctors were found to make fewer mistakes when following precise checklists which *forced* them to pay attention to the smaller details.

Flow charts have exactly the same power. A flow chart is a fantastic tool for very quickly outlining a situation and then providing the very best course of action to get the preferred solution.

In many ways a manager or a business owner will often work as a checklist and as a flow chart. Staff will come to them with problems and challenges and they will then reel off solutions and checklists that the team can follow.

What this basically means then is that a boss can often systemize their business better and remove themselves as an integral part of the workflow, simply by using check lists and flow charts.

Flow Charts for Dealing With Problems

An example of how this might work could be in a car garage. If you ran an auto repair company, then often you would be using a mental flow chart to diagnose and solve car problems. You'd ask yourself, does this car have 'X' problem? Is it making 'Y' noise? Is it 'N' make and model?

By writing this down as a flow chart, all you are effectively doing is giving lesser experienced staff the ability to come to the same conclusions you would. Likewise, checklists can ensure that as they are working on the problem, they will be able to avoid small mistakes.

This way flow charts and checklists mean that you get asked more questions and are better able to work *on* your business rather than *in* your business. What's more, it means that the process from start to finish will be systemized meaning that every customer will get the same level of care and attention and the same great treatment.

What if your flow charts and checklists can't do the job?

Then you look into dealing with the problem. Otherwise though, you'll be bothered much less and your business will practically run itself!

Chapter 7: Life Hacks and Biohacks



One concept that lends itself particularly well to kaizen is the idea of the “life hack” or the “biohack.” This is the small lifestyle or health change that can potentially result in far bigger improvements in your life.

Some biohacks are nonsense – they promise the world and deliver very little. The same goes for lifehacks that look great on Instagram but don’t do much for us in real life. Our goal then, is to look for the ones that really do work and to incorporate those into our lifestyles. When you feel better, you will perform better in every area.

Temperature May Be The Key To Good Sleep

We have always assumed that ambient light is one of the most important factors in determining the quality of our sleep. It follows then that by using lots of devices that emit blue light, we're actually upsetting our 'external zeitgebers' (external cues) and ruining our body clocks. Indigenous tribes have no such issues, and thus they presumably would sleep much better – as nature intended.

In fact though, when recent research looked at the behavior of such indigenous humans, they found that they actually slept at entirely different times – often staying up long after dark and not necessarily allowing the daylight to set their biological clocks.

So, what *did* set those rhythms? Fascinatingly, the one thing that always remained entirely consistent was that they would start waking up as the temperature bottomed out and began to rise. In short, this may be a more important cue than light when it comes to sleep quality. And here we are using thermostats to completely remove that crucial element!

The take-home from this? Opening your window slightly might just be the best way you can possibly improve your sleep. That means you'll wake up feeling fresher, and be able to get more done as a result.

How To Wake Up On Time Every Time



If you want to achieve more with your life, then one of the best and most important things you can do is to wake up at a reasonable time. Start getting up 30 minutes earlier and you will gain 3.5 hours a week to exercise, learn, read...

We need sleep of course. So the aim here is not to sleep 30 minutes less. Rather, it's to get rid of that time we waste by hitting "snooze."

The advice I'm about to give you will go against a lot of what you might have read elsewhere. But stay with me.

Basically, the simply hack is to pick up your phone when the alarm goes and to spend some time looking at it. While many gurus will tell you that picking up your phone will negatively affect hormone levels, and that it will put you in a "reactive state of mind," this isn't entirely true. Your phone won't put you in a reactive state if you turn off notifications and don't check email (just enjoy reading the news or something) and the hormone effect is actually just what you want. The bright screen encourages the production of the neurotransmitter cortisol – which helps us wake up. More important though, is that it's also a *great* way to get up.

Why? Because most of us enjoy looking at our phones – in fact we're a little addicted. Thus the emotional pull to reach for them is strong enough to override serious tiredness. Especially if you have something good lined up.

At the same time, looking at the phone is a small step toward getting up that is much easier than getting out of bed entirely. If you take just this small step, it will often be enough to bring you around, so that you can then go one step *further*.

Set your alarm for 15 minutes earlier than you want to get up. When it goes off, reach for your phone or tablet and then enjoy

reading some news. In 15 minutes, you'll be ready to start the day.

The Best Supplements



Supplements can help to support health in important ways. Is it true that you can get everything you need from your diet? Of course! But most of us don't. And so to be on the safe side, it's often better to pop a pill.

The kinds of supplements I'm talking about, are completely natural substances that should always have been a part of our diets. Substances that have been shown to increase alertness, energy levels, and overall health.

By taking these, you will find that you feel a bit more awake in the mornings, that you are less likely to pick up colds or flu, that your brain is a little sharper, and that you sleep better. By doing that, you'll find that every other activity you engage in benefits. It's a simple change that helps to make all subsequent change easier and more effective.

Here is a simple supplement "stack" that can considerably elevate your mood, your brain health, and your energy levels.

- Vitamin D – Taken in the morning
- Omega 3
- Magnesium Threonate – Taken at night
- Ashwagandha
- Inositol
- Creatine
- Lutein
- Curcumine

Inspiration Hacks

Do you ever find yourself lacking inspiration? Do you ever feel as though you don't have the interest to focus on the thing you're *meant* to be doing, rather than the thing you *should* be doing?

Inspiration is a highly valuable and abstract commodity.

Fortunately, you can get more of it in a few ways. One is to listen

to audio books while you do chores or go for walks. This puts your brain in a more focussed state, and if the book is something you find interesting, then you will be more focussed and creative as a result afterward.

The mistake we make is to watch junk on TV, or to browse Facebook. This meaningless content puts us in a far less productive and useful state of mind. So choose carefully what it is you want to spend your time focussing on.

Dress to Impress

It's a simple life hack, but just by changing the way you dress, you can have huge repercussions in the way you feel and the way others respond to you.

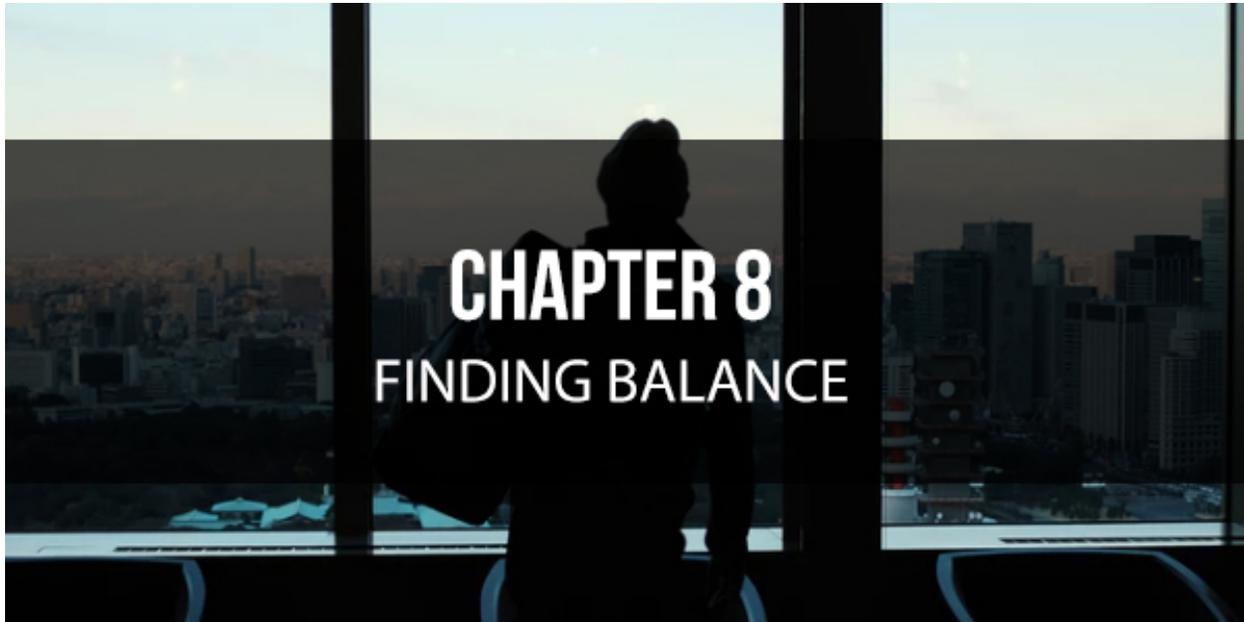
If you wear clothes that you usually use to lie around the house in, you will feel less productive and be less likely to get lots of useful work done as a result. Moreover, you will find that others don't treat you like a professional.

Wear smart clothes, and you will feel more productive and focussed. You will likewise find that others are more likely to want to work with you. This is an example of "wasting" a little time (by spending longer getting ready) that ultimately proves to be an investment in the long run. Kaizen isn't *only* about pruning then, as you can see.

Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting has a huge range of potential benefits. It can help us to lose weight, and thanks to a process called “autophagy” might even have life-extension benefits. What’s more though, is that it also improves energy and focus (by putting our bodies in a more alert “find food” state) and actually saves a lot of time that we normally spend preparing breakfast.

Chapter 8: Finding Balance



Kaizen is all about improving efficiency and optimizing your workflow and lifestyle to achieve more. This is a great way to approach your lifestyle, but it can also have its drawbacks. After all, if all you ever do is to make your lifestyle more and more efficient, you'll eventually miss out on the simple things in life: like relaxing on the couch with your partner, or watching junk TV.

How about going out with friends for drinks?

Some "self-help" books will tell you that you should completely cut these kinds of waste activities out. That you should grind and grind and grind to achieve the things you want.

We disagree. And we believe that for kaizen to work, you also need to find *balance*.

Input and Output

If your only focus is your work, then you'll lose inspiration. Try to think of yourself as a kind of 'input/output' machine. Watching films and playing games isn't a waste of time – it's a source of inspiration and creativity. If you only output, then you'll eventually run out of steam and run out of creative juices.

It's why you often do my best work when you return after a few days off.

Likewise, spending time with other people and relaxing is a very important way to recharge. Your energy is a finite resource.

It's also a very important skill worth cultivating in its own right. Success these days is determined very much by 'soft skills' and the ability to get on with anyone, and to be the life of a party, can actually get you a very long way. And being able to just switch off is a crucial survival skill.

Staying Positive

Some of the most valuable attributes for an entrepreneur, an athlete, or anyone else working toward a far-off vision are positivity, persistence, and self-confidence. You need to be able

to take your lumps when things don't turn out the way you hoped, and you need to be able to jump straight back on that horse.

If you have a large network of friends and family that you love and trust, hobbies that you can't wait to spend more time on, and the ability to sometimes just relax – then staying positive becomes much easier.

And that gives you the optimism and courage to try all over again. How much better do you feel after a day with friends? These experiences are the stuff that life is made of and it's nourishing for the soul.

If your business, your training, or your art are all you have, then a setback in this area of your life can be devastating. You might just give up entirely.

Make the Most of Now

While it might sound a little morbid, the last thing to remember is that you never know what's just around the corner. You might not make it to the age where you get to enjoy the fruits of your labour. Thus, you may never get to enjoy that indulgent lifestyle, or to rebuild those relationships.

And the irony is that most of us wouldn't enjoy a lifestyle of pure relaxation and decadence either – I love writing and learning and training and I plan never to retire. We're happiest when we find

balance. Working toward a goal gives us a purpose – the journey is often more exciting than the destination anyway - while spending time with friends and family, or taking a moment to read a good book, will keep us grounded.

As any stoic might point out, many of us will strive hard toward an obscure notion of ‘success’, so much so that we miss out on the opportunity to be happy right now. In fact, traditional success often just makes it *harder* to spend time with friends or pursue pet projects.

Stop and take a look around: you’ve probably got an awful lot to be proud of already. *If* you never take the time to enjoy the life you’ve already built, you’ll probably never be satisfied and any success that comes will have far less meaning.

So, guess all I’m trying to say is this: don’t feel guilty the next time you take the evening off to be with your family, or the next time you pig out on a piece of cake. Whatever productivity ‘gurus’ might say.

This is as important to your mission as the mission itself.

Closing Comments



To conclude then, Kaizen is an incredibly powerful tool.

When used correctly, it can completely transform your life by helping you to stop wasting time and energy on small things.

You can improve your budget, your health, your physique, and your productivity.

But remember to take the evening off every now and then too!