

Kaizen culture in the workplace

Kaizen is a system which requires interaction and participation from all employees, from the front line crew to the upper management and even CEO of the company. Everyone is encouraged to brainstorm and come up with suggestions for improvement on a regular basis. It is a continuous activity, carried out throughout the year. Employees from all levels of a company work together proactively to achieve continuous, small and incremental improvements to the business processes. In this way, different levels of experiences and skills can be brought together to create very powerful techniques for making improvements in the company's processes.

Kaizen is a process, which if performed correctly, humanizes the workplace, eliminates hard work while encouraging smart work, and motivates people to conduct experiments based on their suggestions, learn to identify and reduce wastes in the business processes. When Kaizen is implemented as an action plan through a series of Kaizen events, it teaches employees to think in different ways about their work. They are pushed to think how their current work can be further improved in order to achieve greater success.

Implementing Kaizen in workplace

There are three stages in implementation of Kaizen in any organization.

1. *Encourage participation* – To ensure active participation from all employees, it is necessary that first awareness about Kaizen is created. After the necessary awareness training sessions are provided, conduct and promote Kaizen events and provide rewards to employees on successful implementations of ideas which are the results of these events. In such events, direct involvement of management is also important.
2. *Training and Education* – A proper training is required for executives to learn the essence of Kaizen. The management level should thoroughly understand Kaizen in an organizational vision context, which needs to be followed vigorously to achieve the desired business results. They must also be taught how to be impartial towards everyone and encourage their employees to actively participate.
3. *Quality level improvement* – After training is completed, people should remain focussed on making changes towards improvement. They should take measures to start making small and incremental changes towards achieving long term goals, like improving efficiency, processes and quality.

In organizations where Kaizen is being implemented, transparency between different levels of the organization is very crucial. Effective communication should take place between all the levels of employees. While employees are brainstorming for ideas, it is important that management also gets involved in these sessions. The manager also should ensure that their

suggestions and ideas are being acted upon immediately and not delayed by a week or month. Employees should be kept informed about other activities going on in the team and how their ideas are being worked upon. People should not feel that their ideas have all gone waste and are not being used. A positive mind set is what will help in keeping Kaizen alive in the organization.

Thus, constant application of Kaizen creates huge long term value by developing the culture that is really needed for true continuous improvement.