

GENERATING AND IMPLEMENTING IDEAS – THE KAIZEN APPROACH

Implementing Ideas

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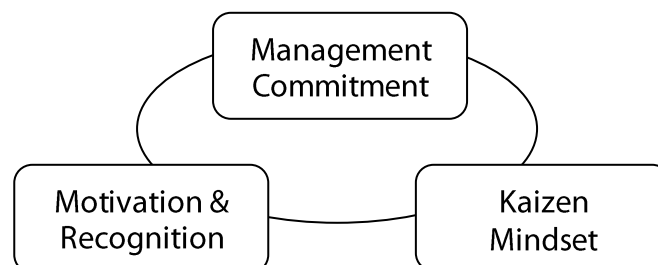
In today's competitive economy, organizations must continuously focus on improving their operations, driving costs out of the supply chain, and increasing customer service levels. Employees, specifically those on the front line, represent the ideal community to generate these improvements as they are interacting with customers on a daily basis. However, many organizations fail to foster the environment required to enable employees the opportunity to generate ideas for improvements and implement them.

Jack Welch, the famous CEO who turned around General Electric, ingrained in his Managers and Senior Leaders the phrase, "Discover where the best ideas are, and implement them". As a senior leader, he focused on getting employees excited about the ideas they brought forth and implemented which cascaded throughout the organization and became a part of the culture and became one of the cornerstones for GE's extraordinary success.

Employee Ideas - The Kaizen Approach

At its grassroots, the Kaizen model is designed to increase organizational productivity, quality, and employee satisfaction. Kaizen focuses on empowering employees, enhancing the work experience, and bringing out the best in every employee and inevitably leads to improved quality, cost structure, culture, and customer service.

One of the key characteristics of Kaizen is Senior Leadership commitment. Leading by example is necessary from Executives to incorporate a Kaizen mindset into any organization. The Kaizen culture is built upon by example, enabled using a common method, and is fostered by recognizing the accomplishments while building upon learning.



Knowledge Base Article

The Kaizen mindset promotes the continuous flow of small implementable ideas rather than large innovative ideas which are costly and take time to implement. When these small ideas are bundled together, they represent substantial cost savings for the organization and serve as self esteem & motivational boosts for employees. With that set as the standard, each person performing a job is seen as the best expert to suggest a small but implementable idea and that over time, thousands of them result in major effects for the organization.

A well structured, idea generation and implementation policy should consist of the following steps and communicated throughout the organization:

- 1) Employee identifies a problem, waste, imperfection or an opportunity for improvement in the organization.
- 2) The employee develops an improvement idea and communicates it to their Supervisor or Manager.
- 3) The Employee & Manager write up the opportunity on a Method Change proposal, identify the impact of the problem, define the proposed solution, quantify the costs and associated benefits, and determine the tasks needed to be completed and task owners for the idea to be implemented.
- 4) Idea is communicated to employees, implemented, and installed in each corresponding area.
- 5) Method Change proposal is posted in the department by the Manager to share with employees to promote idea generation and recognize the accomplishment.

Most organizations have extensive lists of new ideas but fail in the execution stages of identifying, developing, prioritizing, quantifying, and implementing them. When setting the right mindset in an organization, it is important to keep an unbiased view of the current state. The following are techniques for Managers to help promote the Kaizen methodology and idea generation with employees:

- 1) Think of ways in which the process or service can be improved rather than why it can't be improved.
- 2) Don't criticize ideas, rather suggest an improvement.
- 3) Somewhere in the organization, improvement should be made on a daily basis.
- 4) Every process or operation can and should be improved.
- 5) Envision the ideal customer experience and attempt to provide it.
- 6) View problem solving as cross functional, one area often impacts another upstream or downstream, and work collaboratively to improve it.

Conclusions

Whether the organization is small or large, idea generation and implementation by employees is imperative to remaining competitive. The Kaizen approach, when supported by Senior Management, is a valuable tool in connecting continuous improvement, cost savings, and employee self esteem and motivation.

Trident often incorporates the Kaizen approach into its project plans. From experience, we have found it to be a sustainable source of competitive advantage, which results in improved employee engagement and productivity. ✨