Kaizen Events

A Kaizen event is a one-week improvement blitz aimed at overhauling a core work process. Used extensively at leading private-sector companies and public-sector agencies, Kaizen is an approach of choice for increasing efficiency, boosting customer satisfaction, and cutting costs.

In Ohio state government, Kaizen teams are on the move and getting great results: streamlined processes, reduced red tape, greater efficiency, increased customer satisfaction, and big savings.

Here’s how Kaizen is different...and better

Improvement has always been a priority in state government, but Kaizen takes it to a new level. Here’s how:

INTENSITY
A Kaizen team does all its work in a nonstop stretch from Monday through Friday. This compressed time frame ensures continuity and efficiency.

IMMEDIACY
Too often in the past, teams generated recommendations that never got implemented. With Kaizen, implementation is more immediate. While some improvements may need to be phased in, many changes are put in place during the Kaizen week. Agency directors, assistant directors, team sponsors, and other key leaders visit with the team as the week unfolds to get updates, give input, make decisions, and remove barriers.

IMPORTANCE
Kaizen has its biggest measurable impact when used to improve major processes. The best candidate for a Kaizen event is a costly, complex, delay-ridden process that is crucial to customers and integral to the agency’s strategic priorities.

Here’s what happens during a Kaizen event

A Kaizen event begins with just-in-time learning on Monday...and ends with a celebration and presentation of plans and projected results on Friday. In between, team members dive deeply into their work process. They question their assumptions, apply their experience, exercise their creativity, analyze the data, and build a process that’s far simpler, faster, better, and less costly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1 LEARNING</th>
<th>DAY 2 DISCOVERY</th>
<th>DAY 3 IMPROVEMENT</th>
<th>DAY 4 IMPLEMENTATION</th>
<th>DAY 5 RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn Kaizen methodology</td>
<td>Finish mapping current process</td>
<td>Design new process</td>
<td>Review and refine changes</td>
<td>Present results and changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin mapping current process</td>
<td>Develop ideas for improvement</td>
<td>Calculate measurable impact</td>
<td>Develop implementation plans</td>
<td>Schedule follow-ups</td>
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A Kaizen team typically involves 10-18 people. This includes staff who work the process, managers or supervisors of the process, one or more customers or other stakeholders, and even an outsider with no knowledge of the process who can bring a fresh perspective.

On the right is a snapshot of a Kaizen event on its fourth day. Here’s what’s happening:

A. A subgroup fine-tunes plans to develop informational materials and training to support the improvements.
B. A LeanOhio consultant fine-tunes the new process map based on input from the team.
C. One of the Kaizen participants consults with a subgroup for clarification.
D. The group on the right is working on details of an especially complex part of the new process. They will report their findings to the whole group in order to build consensus.
E. Stretching from the wall on the right and continuing on the left is a complex map of the current process. On the facing wall (B) is a map of the new approach – with 101 fewer steps!