

The Kaizen System – <http://www.bes-llc.com/kaizen.htm>

Kaizen is a method of improving business operations that rests at the core of the Lean Enterprise system. Balanced Enterprise Solutions introduces Kaizen to your business, and then teaches business management how to ensure Kaizen becomes standard protocol in the workplace.

A typical Kaizen event evaluates the Value Stream in its current state (of a specific area of the operation). With the assistance of a team of employees, Kaizen changes the current VS state to a "future Value Stream state" by eliminating waste, increasing production speed, and increasing the reliability of the process. A definition of the word Kaizen in its native language (Japanese) is "to take it apart and put back together in a better way." What is taken apart is usually a process, system, product, or service.

Kaizen often takes place one small step at a time, hence the English translation: "continuous improvement." However, radical changes for the sake of goals such as "just in time," need the full support of upper level management to succeed. Goals for kaizen workshops are set very high; there are countless examples of drastic process improvements that serve as proof of their practicality.

The cycle of kaizen activity can be defined as:

1. standardize an operation
2. measure the standardized operation (find cycle time and amount of in-process inventory)
3. gauge measurements against requirements
4. innovate to meet requirements and increase productivity
5. standardize the new, improved operations
6. continue cycle ad infinitum

This philosophy is different from the "command-and-control" improvement programs of the mid-20th century. Kaizen methodology includes making changes and looking at the results, then adjusting further. Large-scale preplanning and extensive project scheduling are replaced by smaller experiments in improvement, which can be rapidly adapted as new improvements are suggested.