

KAIZEN – CASE STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A MANUFACTURING CELL

INTRODUCTION

Change and how to implement it quickly and effectively is one of the subjects that has faced all companies in all countries since organised industry began. As change is associated with people and processes it is a complicated and fascinating area to work in. Over the last 10 years I have been involved in change both as a consultant with multi national companies and small privately owned companies as well as being the operations manager of an organisation who had the day to day responsibility of trying to improve manufacturing. There have been many books, seminars and papers written about change as well as thousands of consultants who will offer advise and help in changing almost any thing. This case study is about one approach that I have recently been involved in with a large multinational company. They used a technique called Kaizen events to try to implement quickly and efficiently change in there manufacturing companies. They used the same technique all over the world and we achieved some astounding results. This case study outlines what Kaizen is, how it was used and then gives a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach to implementing change.

WHAT IS A KAIZEN EVENT?

Kaizen events are a mechanism for obtaining vast improvements in businesses in a very short time. Kaizen is a Japanese word for continuous improvement and although in Japanese companies the word for step change events is __Kaikaku__ in certain companies the word Kaizen is easier to use. (Kai means change Kaku means for the radical Kaizen means change for the better) The events have been used in many companies including Invensys where I was exposes to the process to try and implement step changes and move the company on quickly toward a Lean Enterprise vision. Although I have done improvement activities for many years, the Kaizen events have shown that if it is supported form the top and run well then in a very short time massive improvements and ultimately step changes can occur that drastically improve the performance of a company.

SET UP OF THE EVENT

Typically the events we run lasted 4 days on site and involved a group of people from all levels and functions within the organisation who were brought together to solve a pressing business problem.

SET UP OF THE PROBLEM

The process used

The basic business model used is outlined below. As you can see the first day is dedicated to training and awareness of many Lean Enterprise tools and techniques focusing on the ones that would be most applicable for the problems to be solved. The day would start with a senior manager explaining why the event was taking place, how important these events were and that this was the first in a series of similar type events that were designed to implement serious change and hence generate a step change to the company. The senior manager would highlight the fact that these multi level and multi functional teams would be given the authority to change the business as they see fit without asking for permission.

DATA COLLECTION

Define the scope of the project

- Basic teambuilding
- Process map
- Time events
- Count WIP
- Calculate Process Dynamic Cycle time
- Calculate travel time
- Calculate man travel
- Draw layout
- Calculate the takt time
- Define problems and positive points

Set targets and fill out standard sheets

Concept design

- Generate solutions – need catalyst, need innovation
- Determine problems and how to solve

Action plan for implementation

- Split tasks

Calculate improvements

Presentation to management team

Advantages / Disadvantages of Kaizen events