

IS IT KAIZEN?



OR IS IT NOT KAIZEN? AND HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

KAIZEN IS

- "Many small changes for the better which come from the common sense and experience of the people who do the work. Whether employees are solving a problem or clarifying a standard or trying a new idea, it's all kaizen
- The means by which a multitude of small improvements are made and problems solved, because many hands make light work
- The means by which employees and management deepen their understanding of Lean and develop self-confidence to provide more improvement. Learning by doing, or "tacit" learning.
- The means by which management comes to understand the significant effect of "small changes"
- The process by which the three previous points are put into practice and which ultimately changes an organization's culture from traditional manufacturing to Lean Manufacturing
- Continuous. It never ends.

KAIZEN IS NOT

- A few million-dollar improvements. Occasionally a good idea could create this much benefit, but one million \$1.00 improvements is more the norm. Kaizen intended to engage every employee, not a few heavy-hitting teams.
- Multiple-day "events". Most kaizen is accomplished in small chunks, done as time permits, when situations present themselves, without any formality.
- Changes done *to* employees by managers or engineers, no matter how well-meaning. Changes done this way are nothing more than "status quo" behavior.
- A kaizen "blitz" in which improvements are done apart from the work day. Rather remember that kaizen are small improvements we fit into our workday. Batched events tend to reinforce the "status quo", an "A-Team" mentality rather than the idea of "everybody, everyday".

A TEST TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

If it invokes and represents all four of the following points of TPS Philosophy, then it is Kaizen.

- Is it focused on the ideal of perfect quality & delivery to the internal or external customer?
- Is it based on direct observation?
- Does it respect employees as *agents* of change?
- Is it self-managing and implemented to the greatest extent possible?

