

Calling All Business Professionals: The Japanese Word You Need To Memorize



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Kaizen. It's a Japanese business philosophy that calls for continual development and constant improvement. It's a mindset that companies like Cisco employ throughout their whole business, from the CEO down. And it's a way of thinking that can revolutionize the way you do work.

What is kaizen?

Kai means "change" and Zen means "good" – so the goal behind the business philosophy is to focus on a number of changes that eventually add up to overall improvements within the company structure. The philosophy says that change is continuous and incremental – even small refinements compound and are transformative over time.

Kaizen doesn't offer a step-by-step guide to improve productivity; instead it calls for holistic implementation. It should dictate the way you think and take on challenges. For any positive change to take place, everyone has to believe in the process and long-term goals.

History of kaizen

Throughout the years, numerous companies have used the kaizen principles to improve

productivity and efficiency. This includes some of the world's largest automotive and aerospace companies.

Kaizen first entered the scene after World War II, when Toyota implemented the philosophy in its production sector. But it wasn't until the 1950s that "kaizen" became a household name thanks to Masaaki Imai. He was a Japanese organizational theorist and management consultant who wrote the book "Kaizen: The Secret To Japan's Competitive Success." After penning the novel, he opened the Kaizen Institute to help Western companies implement the philosophy. The organization still runs today.

How do we implement kaizen?

Kaizen calls for all employees to make continuous, small improvements to their daily processes and productivity. One principle of kaizen is abolishing old and traditional ways of thinking, so use the philosophy to streamline and prioritize your 'to-do' lists. Listing out the things you do and finding new, more efficient ways to do them can make room for innovation. In your day-to-day, use memory aids and folders marked "urgent" to streamline and improve your personal workflow.



Cisco embraces this philosophy holistically. Digital transformation is disrupting business in every industry by breaking down barriers between people, businesses, and things. By removing these barriers, companies are able to create new products and services and find more efficient ways of doing business.

And that is ultimately what kaizen is – the practice and culture of continued improvement that sets the groundwork for better quality, productivity, safety, and a better, more efficient workplace for everyone.

These innovations are happening across organizations of all types, in every industry. But they share a common theme: create new customer experiences, transform business models, and empower workforce innovation. To do this, companies need a foundation that is outcome-driven and enabled by technology.

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