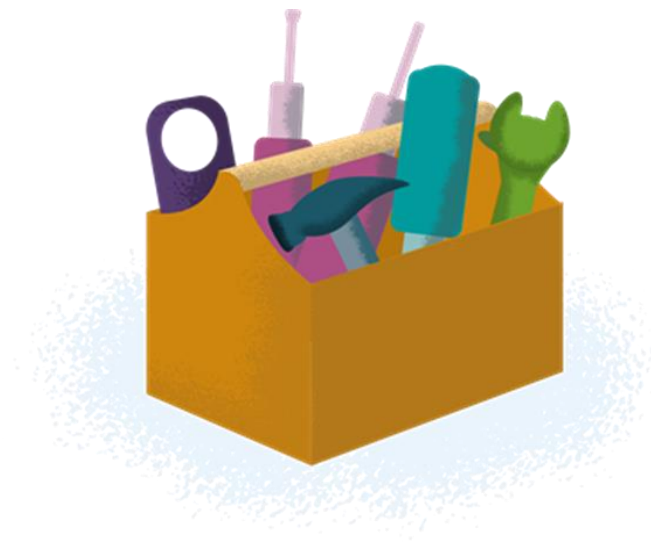


Improvement Cymru Academy Toolkit Guide



Kaizen

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Introduction

Kaizen comes from the Japanese word 'Change for the good' with 'Kai' meaning change and 'Zen' meaning better or good. In Lean methodology Kaizen refers to continuous improvement as is an important part of Lean culture and is used by everyone within an organisation. By using Kaizen, you can make small, incremental changes that will lead to significant long-term benefits creating a better work environment. The primary goal of Kaizen is to increase quality and productivity by minimising waste. Kaizen is not limited to specific industries and can be applied across several industry sectors including healthcare. Embracing the Kaizen way can create a culture of excellence and sustained improvements within an organisation.

Rationale

Having a Kaizen approach within an organisation has several benefits:

1. Continuous Improvement

Small changes will lead to a big impact over time especially within healthcare because by implementing Kaizen, organisations can address inefficiencies and enhance their processes.

2. Staff Engagement

Kaizen encourages all staff within an organisation to be involved with improvement. Staff are empowered to identify problems, find solutions, and participate in improvement work.

3. Drives Data

Kaizen relies on data analysis. Organisations can collect data in several areas e.g. performance, patient outcomes etc... This will enable organisations to make informed decisions to achieve better results through improvement.

4. Promotes a positive culture.

Kaizen is not only a methodology but also promotes a cultural change. It encourages staff to have an open mindset, be adaptable and to continually

improve. Organisations can become more resilient and responsive to the ever-changing needs of healthcare.

5. Sustainability

Kaizen focuses on sustainable improvements, enabling positive improvements with that focus on quality.

Background

Kaizen emerged after World War Two when Japan was trying to re-build its economy. Japan was driven by a need for efficiency without reducing quality and many Japanese companies adopted Kaizen as a fundamental approach to continuous improvement. The concept of Kaizen was significantly influenced by William Edwards Deming who was an American Statistician. W.E Deming emphasised the need for statistical process control, quality management and involvement of staff in improvement. Toyota - is a Japanese company, is a pioneer of Kaizen which is integrated into the Toyota Production System where there is an emphasis on waste reduction, standard work, and staff empowerment.

When to use it?

Kaizen is used to continually support ongoing improvement work that links to organisational goals and objectives. It can be used to streamline processes allowing them to become more efficient which will in turn, enhance service quality. Kaizen is also used in Agile project management.

How to use it?

There are six steps outlined in the book 'Toyota Kaizen Methods: Six Steps to Improvement' written by Isao Kato and Art Smalley (2010). These six steps can be implemented in any industry sector. These steps are not isolated and form a cycle of continuous improvement.

Step One: Discover Improvement Potential

Firstly, you will need to identify any areas that need improving. This will involve looking for any problems or inefficiencies within a work process. At this point it is important to engage staff at all levels, who are involved with the process. They are the best people to contribute their ideas and observations from their experience of the process.

Step Two: Analyse the current methods

Once you have identified an issue that needs improving, you will need to closely investigate the issue to understand the root cause and examine the existing process. Data collection and analysis plays an important role in this step.

Step Three: Generate Original ideas.

You and your team who are involved with the process will need to brainstorm potential solutions to address the issues that have been identified. There are several different approaches you could take when working with your team to generate ideas (See our [‘Divergent and convergent toolkit guide here](#) for more information).

Step Four: Develop an implementation Plan.

With your potential solutions it is important to create a detailed implementation plan which should include defining the steps, resources, and a realistic and achievable timeline.

Step Five: Implement the plan.

Now it is time to put your proposed solution into action and test it in a controlled environment. The PDCA cycle is an effective way to implement Kaizen. It consists of four phases: Plan, Do, Check, and Act (See our [Introduction to Lean Toolkit Guide here](#) for more information). Data collection is important during this stage as you will need to collect data to evaluate the solution in the next step. You will need to use both quantitative and qualitative data to fully evaluate your proposed solution.

Step Six: Evaluate the new method.

You will need to assess the impact of your solution – was it successful? Does it need to be adapted? Or do you need to abandon this proposed solution because it was unsuccessful and try something new?

What Next?

Gemba walks (See [Gemba toolkit guide here](#) for more information). Gemba walks can be performed to observe the actual workplace and processes to identify improvement opportunities. Go on a Gemba walk for a process within your workplace to look for any issues that need improving.

Helpful tips

To improve there needs to be a standard in place so we can check the process against the standard. This helps to determine if improvement need to be made (See our '[Standardisation Toolkit Guide here](#) for more information). If you have a specific and complex challenge, then you can hold Kaizen events which should involve multi-disciplinary teams and actionable improvements.

Additional Resources

If you are interested in learning more about how improvement practices can benefit your workplace, we offer a range of training courses. Visit our website for more information. <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/improvement-cymru/improvement-cymru-academy/> or email us improvementcymruacademy@wales.nhs.uk to find about the improvement courses we offer.

Further reading

Kato, I., Smalley, A. (2010). Toyota Kaizen Methods: Six Steps to Improvement. New York. Productivity Press.

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