

КАИЗЕН – НАЧИН РАЗМИШЉАЊА

KAIZEN – THE WAY OF THINKING



Сања В. Раденковић,

докторанткиња

Универзитет у Београду,
Филолошки факултет
Студентски трг 3, 11000 Београд
sanjar@telekom.rs

Sanja V. Radenković,

Ph.D. student

University in Belgrade,
Faculty of Philology
Studentski trg 3, 11000 Beograd
sanjar@telekom.rs

Kaizen is a Japanese word that means *continuous improvement*. It is made up of two characters in Japanese: *kai*, which means “change”, and *zen*, which means “good”. Masaaki Imai defined kaizen in his book *The Key to Japan's Competitive Success* as “a means of continuing improvement in personal life, home life, social life, and work life. At the workplace, kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone – managers and workers equally. The kaizen business strategy involves everyone in an organization working together to make improvements without large capital investments” (Imai, 1986). Managers are encouraged to improve the efficiency of the existing infrastructure instead of investing in more of the same. “And that”, says Imai, “can happen only if you are familiar with every inch of your gemba (workplace)”.

The objectives of kaizen include eliminating waste or activities that add cost but not value, just-in-time delivery, production load leveling of amount and types, standardized work, paced moving lines and right-sized equipment. Basically, kaizen takes processes, systems, products, and services apart then rebuilds them in a better way. Kaizen goes hand-in-hand

with the quality control. Kaizen does not view problems as negative but rather sees them as positive opportunities for improvement.

Kaizen is used to describe a company culture where everyone, from the CEO to the front desk officers, regularly evaluates his or her works and thinks of ways to improve them. The concept is based on the assumption that small steps on a regular basis will lead to large improvements over time. This philosophy first appeared when several Japanese businesses, shortly after World War II, embraced the idea that doing things the way they have always been done was a bad idea, especially when better options were available that would make them more competitive. Inspired by western competitors and manufacturing methods, kaizen came to be synonymous with company-wide efforts to improve upon and intelligently streamline business practices and manufacturing methods while simultaneously respecting the product, craft, or the people involved with making it.

In the 1980s, with the globalization of Japanese businesses, kaizen became globally known. According to Imai, kaizen “...was

originally developed in Toyota and spread among other Japanese manufacturers as they gained fame in the international market for higher quality products.”(Imai, 1986). Following their expansion worldwide, Japanese multinational manufacturing companies tried to duplicate the quality management methods within their new factories. When Japanese firms attempted to increase local procurement of intermediate inputs, local suppliers were requested to conform to Japan’s quality standards. Accordingly, Japanese companies often assisted their local partners in learning the kaizen philosophy and practices. For that reason, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) began to relay on the kaizen management style to transform the industrial activities of a number of developing countries.

Kaizen is when *all* employees look for areas to improve and provide suggestions based on their observations and experience and employees are rewarded for changes that improve the workplace. By involving employees in making changes, workers gain confidence and are happier. Generally, these suggestions are for small changes that incrementally change the business for the better.

Kaizen improvements are typically applied by using Plan – Do – Check – Act (PDCA). Kaizen is a slow but ongoing process of improvement. It is important to note that kaizen is a way of thinking, not a project to complete. To implement it, all employees should receive training on the concept of kaizen and should have some guidelines in terms of what they need to do before implementing a change. It is also important to note that management is trained and is behind the effort. Kaizen will result in many more suggestions for improve-

ments and changes and will take away from a rigid focus on moving items quickly through the existing production process. Management must be ready to accept some time away from current work to focus on changes with longer-range impact.

The complete implementation of Japanese style management and human relations would likely be unsuccessful in America or some other countries, including Serbia, because of cultural differences. The transfer of some Japanese aspects, such as workers’ participation in decision making, would likely provide some improvement to American and Serbian companies without disturbing cultural traditions.

For most American and Serbian companies, kaizen involves a significant change in the corporate culture. This is the key. The attitudes of employees – from the top management down to the new hires – will need to change. Kaizen needs to become something all employees do because they want to, and because they know it is good for them and the company. It should not be something employees do only because management dictates that. Successful executives must learn to apply the concept of kaizen, which means making simple, common-sense improvements and refinements of critical business processes. The result: greater productivity, quality, and profits are achieved with minimal cost, time, and effort invested.

Kaizen is not a formally adopted method, but involves a transformation of the working environment and needs to become something all employees do because they want to, and because they know it is good for them and for the company.

So, the main question is – “Can we act kaizen?”

Утемељење самураја као владајуће класе извршило је дубок утицај на културу и психологију јапанског народа, што је објашњено у монографији „Каизен-начин размишљања“. За јапанску културу од велике је важности филозофија каизена која је, заправо, део свакодневице и културе сваког Јапанаца. На пословном плану, као и у пословном свету, концепт каизена је толико дубоко инфилтриран у начин размишљања и менаџера и запослених, заправо свих житеља Јапана, да они често и нису свесни тога да не само што дубоко размишљају у складу са начелима каизен филозофије већ и да им је она усађена у процесе предлагања и доношења одлука. Овакав начин размишљања и рада заправо

јесте оно што издваја јапанске компаније у односу на друге. Због доказаног успеха јапанских предузећа која су применила каизен филозофију, она је имплементирана у организације широм света као средство за унапређење производних вредности, као и за унапређење морала и безбедности запослених. Када говоримо о каизену, говоримо о малим променама, али када се оне примене на стратегију, онда је реч о великим стратешким променама. Сваки запослени сваког радног дана треба да учини неко добро дело, односно да унапреди свој радни процес и на тај начин пружи одређени скроман, али значајан допринос својој компанији и шире – својој земљи.