

Take advantage of the crisis to develop people and processes

Recently I read an excellent article published by the BDC entitled* “Covid-19: Avoid wasting time and money by taking control of your operations”. Stephane Chrusten Senior Business Advisor, BDC Advisory Services gives 4 points to consider as you navigate the troubled waters of a post Covid-19 world:

1. Determine the appropriate demand
2. Ensure the production plan is followed by everyone
3. Measure your productivity
4. Double down on technology

All these points are very relevant and need addressing now as you begin to plan the way forward, however, there are two glaring omission that if you do not consider and act upon first, you risk everything.

1. Reconnect with all your people
2. Cocreate the recovery plan together

If this pandemic has taught us anything, it has taught us just how connected to each other we really are. Young people largely unaffected by the virus could unwittingly pass it onto parents or grandparents who were at risk. We have also redefined as a society what services and therefore workers are essential during the pandemic. The truth is, we have always been connected and rely on each other. Our society exists only because we rely on everyone to do their part; our businesses are no different. What’s more, our understanding of where true value is created in our organization and by whom is essential to our long-term success. Design, product development and sales are of course the beginning of the value chain; they set the vision of what the product will be, but without well trained, healthy production employees who understand and are committed to turning the vision into reality, what value have you really created?

Reconnect with all your employees

It is very possible that you have communicated more during the pandemic with all your employees than you did in the entire previous year, but your voice was competing with a lot of other voices coming from Government, Community and Family as well as the internal voice of fear. Now that your employees see that the business has survived the worst of the crisis, some of the background noise and fear will have subsided and they will be looking for leadership to lead them forward. Note to senior leaders and owners: Don’t delegate this, do it yourself and let your managers follow your lead. Having a “townhall” style meeting would work best, one that included time for questions to be asked by your employees. Creating a mechanism for anonymous questions to be gathered beforehand would be a smart move; you want to know how everyone is really feeling.

Cocreate the recovery plan together

In our rush towards normality in our operations we must acknowledge, there is a “New Normal” that will emerge whether we like it or not. This “New Normal” will best developed together with everyone who works in your business. The greatest misconception I have come across in my 22 years working with



organizations implementing Kaizen, is that people hate change; this is not true. Our brains are literally wired to both deal with and effect change, we are after all, the best problem solvers on the planet. People do however hate change that is imposed on them, but they will gladly embrace change that they helped create. When we seek to solve problems for our employees, we not only rob them of the sheer pleasure of coming up with a solution, but we also ensure resistance to what every solution we provide them with. The new normal will include, health and safety measures, working hours, multiskilling to ensure greater flexibility and a personal responsibility for first time quality and greater productivity.

How can I include all employees in developing the new plan ?

There are two aspects to the answer; one is the process of developing the plan and the other is practicalities of how we engage our entire workforce in this process.

The process

There are some tried and tested tools and processes for problem solving and countermeasure planning.

1. Get the voice of the customer: Understand what your customer now values as this may have changed in the post Covid-19 world
2. Understand using observation and data what the current state is of your operation in relation to what the customer is now demanding
3. Create a Gap analysis between the desired state and the current state
4. Brainstorm solutions
5. Perform a cost benefit analysis of the possible solutions
6. Rank in order of which solutions appear to be the most cost effect and safe solutions
7. Test chosen solutions
8. Check the data from the tests
9. Make any changes needed
10. Implement changes with new training plans and SOP's

How we engage our entire workforce in this process

The short answer is, implementing the Daily Kaizen principles, tools and routines that enable you to connect every single employee together with managers and leaders daily.

Daily Kaizen tools and routines include:

1. A team board for every team in the organization
2. A short daily team huddle meeting using the team board
3. A help chain which enables support from managers and leaders to be deployed to provide resources, make decisions or help break down barriers to achieving the vision set for each team

In 1990 Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web, which later became known as "The Internet". The big ideas behind the design of the Internet were so simple and fundamental; they were the sharing of computing processing power and information. These simple ideas revolutionized the world and impact every aspect of our life today. When we allow all our employees to be involved in the problem-solving process, we use these simple yet powerful ideas of sharing resources and information which have the potential of revolutionizing how are business work.



One last thing

One of the phrases I have come to hate over the years is “leverage the Crisis”; I first heard it said by a middle ranking executive of an international software company that will remain nameless. This executive said it to me with a wink of the eye, as he expected me as a consultant to complicit with his plan to Take Advantage of his employees. I now have recognised this mentality play out in businesses and Government alike to disastrous results. At the heart of Kaizen is respect for all people in an organization, which requires humility from owners and leaders, understanding the complex interdependent relationship they have with everyone who works for them.

Might I suggest a better way through this crisis? Instead of **taking advantage of your people**, I would suggest **Take advantage of the crisis to develop people and processes** and Prepare a vertical start plan and a strategic response to the “new normal” that is coming. Don’t worry you’re not alone, you have your entire workforce ready to help.

Good luck!!

*Link to the BDC article

https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/operations/operational-efficiency/pages/covid-19-how-to-modify-your-operations.aspx?utm_campaign=Covid19-In-Business--2020-05-27--EN&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua&elqct=272&elqcsid=10120

Chris Leonard
Consulting Director

Kaizen Institute Canada (BC) Ltd
300-1090 Homer St., Vancouver, BC,
V6B 2W9
Cell: (604) 2175870
Email: cleonard@kaizen.com
Skype for Business: [cleonard@kaizen.com](skype:cleonard@kaizen.com)
Web: <https://ca.kaizen.com/>

CKCA is pleased to connect with Chris who has presented at several CKCA events on the merits of Kaizen in the workplace. CKCA is currently working on an assessment tool the Kaizen Institute and Sunrise Kitchens in BC which will be launched later this year.