



The above photo shows a complex core process that met its match during a Kaizen event. The team eliminated 103 steps, reducing overall process time by as much as 70%.

Kaizen is a powerful philosophy, methodology, and tool set. Kaizen events are a proven best practice for analyzing processes, identifying waste, understanding roots causes, creating new processes that are far simpler and faster, and achieving major results.

To date, more than 50 Kaizen events have been conducted in state government. They've reduced the number of process steps and the start-to-finish process time by more than 50% on average. Kaizen is cutting the complexity in half while delivering service in half the time.

Over the course of all these events, we have seen that what happens *before* the Kaizen event is often the biggest key to success *during* and *after* the event. Care must be taken to clarify the focus of the Kaizen event and to scope the initiative properly.

That's why this Go/No-Go Checklist. It spells out crucial questions that need to be answered in order to set up a Kaizen event for success.

## Kaizen Event Go/No-Go Checklist



### Is the scope complete and appropriately sized?

- Is the scope too large to achieve success? (Don't try to boil the ocean.)
- Is the scope so small that success will not be transformational? (Don't spend this kind of time and energy unless you can achieve significant results – at least a 50% improvement.)
- Are you improving a complete system instead of putting Band-aids on parts of the process?
- Is there any info/decisions made about future plans, “sacred cows,” or past or potential problems that the team needs to understand and to be fully empowered to implement change?

### Are the right people on the team?

- Do you have all the areas of the process being improved represented on the team?
- Do you have the horsepower needed to make critical decisions on the team?
- Do you have customers on the team, or have you surveyed or discussed the event with process users so the “voice of the customer” is represented?

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- Have you included thoughtful organizational thinkers with little or no knowledge of the process to provide a fresh perspective to the team?
- Are the team members strong, well respected, knowledgeable employees – and not simply the people you can most afford to do without for a week?

**Is the necessary data and information to ensure and measure success available?**

- Is there baseline data (monthly, yearly volumes; number of FTE’s assigned to the process; etc.) available for current lead time / cycle time / performance measures?
- If there was a data-gathering plan developed, has the information been collected?

**Is the agency ready to implement significant improvements and changes immediately?**

- Are there decisions to be made by management before the team can implement change?
- Is there a strong mandate to do things differently the Monday following the Kaizen event?

**Is the event a top priority of the agency for that week?**

- Is the entire team committed and scheduled to spend the full week focused on the event?
- Is a large meeting room and breakout rooms available the entire week?
- Is the team leader committed to change, available all week, and able to put in the time before, during, and after the event to ensure success?
- Are subject matter experts able to be on standby to support the team as needed?
- Is the sponsor committed to implementing the results and available to help remove barriers during the course of the week?

**Within the agency, is there a common understanding and commitment to the Kaizen process?**

- Is there an understanding within the agency that the team is not just making recommendations – but that it will make decisions in consultation with management during the week that will begin to be implemented immediately?
- Are all levels of the organization (management, unions, and affected workers) aware of the Kaizen event and understand that there will be significant changes as a result?
- Is there a commitment to designing and implementing the best solution and improvements for the customer by using data, Lean tools, and the process?

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## Out of Scope

### Money

We will not improve by throwing money at the problem. The focus will be on eliminating waste, though after redesigning the process the team may consider and make a business case for an investment that increases effectiveness or has a positive return on investment.

### People

We will not improve by simply assigning more people to do the work. This does not mean that people may not be redistributed to other parts of the process when it makes sense as part of the redesigned flow, or to temporarily reduce a backlog.

### IT Solutions

We will not improve by automating the existing process. After the team has eliminated waste and designed a more efficient work flow the team may consider and develop a business case for implementing an IT solution. In fact, a Kaizen Event can be an effective way to develop the requirements for an IT project.

### Job Loss

Job duties may change as a result of the team's redesign of the process, but in no case will any team members become unemployed as a result of their improvement efforts.

### Laws, Statutes, Regulations, and Contracts

The team will focus its improvement efforts on opportunities in their control. The team will not try to change rules, laws and regulations outside their control, but will very carefully examine the language to ensure existing interpretations are accurate.