Kaizen

This time of the year sees the start of many new activities in schools and universities and so why not consider trying a new quality technique to re-invigorate your approach to continuous improvement. One technique that you may like to consider is Kaizen

Kaizen is Japanese for Improvement or Continuous Improvement. Although, in Japan the concept applies to all aspects of life, in a business setting it means on-going, never ending improvement, involving everyone.

'kai) means 'change' or 'the action to correct'.
'zen' means 'good'.

The approach has been credited with being the single most important concept in Japanese management. In many organisations meeting specification is often considered good enough – and they see no value in making further efforts at improvement. This is fine for a while, but if your competitors are continuously improving and you are standing still, then you will eventually be left behind. In contrast, Kaizen requires on-going, never ending efforts at improvement, no matter how good the product, process or service may be considered. The progress and refinement of the Kaizen approach has resulted in the development of an outstanding collection of management tools which, incidentally, still continue to be evolved and polished. The application and use of these tools is an important element in the Kaizen approach. The Kaizen approach is not looking for the big initiative or project but optimisation and small improvements to existing systems

You can start by asking:
- What is the goal?
- What is the standard condition?
- What is the current situation?
- What is different between Standard and current situation?

If we know where we are and where we want to be, we know our goal and what we need to do to get there. Kaizen activity does not need to follow a certain format, last a certain number of days or even require that you call it "kaizen". What is important is that changes are made based on certain underlying values and guiding principles.

Some ideas to help you start are::
- Many small ideas are better than one big improvement (and often these ideas come straight from the workforce‖)
- Think about "Try-storming" rather than brainstorming (Try-Storming is a combination of quick brainstorming working with rapid prototyping. For further information please contact geoff@qmt.co.uk)
- Kaizen must make the work easier for people – this will be more likely if the ideas come from the employees)
- A back to basics approach can help e.g. try using a MUDA approach to and identify / remove wastes
- Look at implementing process control to stop seesaw yields
- Promote Kaizen as "Win win" for all

Climate Change – a One Stop Shop

Defra have recently launched a new web site to help organisations across the public and private sectors to develop imaginative and innovative approaches to deal with the impact of a changing climate. The website is a one-stop shop offering easy access to a comprehensive collection of resources on adapting to climate change. The website can be found at http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climate change/index.htm

Climate Change Minister Joan Ruddock said, "Our climate is changing. We need to future proof our buildings and public spaces against this as much as possible. Even nature itself will need help to adapt to climate change if we're not to lose precious diversity. We'll need good design that works with the environment rather than against it, creating buildings that stay cool in the heat and deal with water that will be in short supply in summer and pouring into the drains during heavy storms. This one stop shop will help people to identify the challenges we will face in the future and to make the decisions now that will help us to manage them".

Work is Good for You

A new green paper "No one Written Off" includes proposals to give people more support through a personalised back to work programme. Research carried out at the University of York has shown that with the right support people with mental health problems can get back into work and for many having a job may actually help with their recovery.
Research has also concluded that more than 90% of people with health problems can be helped to return to work by following a few principles of good health care and work place management. Effective return to work depends on two key strands:
- Healthcare which includes a focus on work – this means early intervention which is tailored to meet the individual needs

- Workplaces that are accommodating – incorporating a proactive approach to supporting return to work and the temporary provision of modified work

The report Mental Health & Employment can be found at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/reports2007-2008/rrep513.pdf

ISO Standard aimed at making IT office equipment friendly for the elderly and disabled.

A new standard ISO/IEC 10779:2008, Information technology – Office equipment accessibility guidelines for elderly persons and person with disability, provides guidelines for the design and evaluation of office equipment to facilitate their operation by persons with the widest range of capabilities, including persons with disabilities or temporary disabilities. The standard provides guidelines to be used when planning, developing and designing office equipment such as copying machines, page printers and multi-function devices. It outlines specifications for:

- Operation
- Display (e.g. auditory)
- Mechanical operable controls (e.g. position, shapes)
- Terms (e.g. commonly used expressions), and
- Maintenance, such as care of equipment and parts replacement by users.

The standard can bring the advantages of IT to a much wider range of users. As IT has the potential to improve the lifestyles of older persons and persons with disability e.g. by allowing a person whose mobility is severely impaired, or who has difficulty lifting weights to get his or her job done alone with office equipment, then making sure that they can use it is important.

For further information please visit www.iso.ch

An Emmy Award for ITU, ISO and IEC

An Emmy Award has been awarded by the US Academy of Television Arts & Sciences to ITU, ISO and IEC for their work in producing an advanced video coding standard – H.264| MPEG-4 AVC. This is a highly efficient video compression method that substantially reduces the bandwidth needed to deliver high quality video and the space required to store it.

The award was presented at a ceremony in Hollywood and was received by Malcolm Johnson, Director of ITU's standardisation bureau and Scott Jameson, Chair of the ISO/IEC Joint Technical Committee on IT.

The standard is now being deployed in products and services from companies such as Adobe, Apple, BBC, BT, France Telecom, Intel, Motorola, Nokia, Polycom, Samsung, Sony, and Toshiba to deliver high definition video images over broadcast television, cable TV and a variety of direct-broadcast satellite-based television services as well as Blu-Ray disc formats, mobile phones and Internet Protocol television.

For further information, please visit www.iso.ch

Unlock Innovation

The UK Intellectual Property Office has launched a new booklet to help small businesses exploit their intellectual property. The booklet "How Licensing Intellectual Property Can Help Your Business" provides a wide range of information on IP licensing which includes advice on how to approach and conduct a productive IP licensing deal.

The booklet can be viewed at http://ipo.gov.uk/licensingbooklet.pdf

Sustainable Development – free booklet

Defra have recently published a free booklet on sustainable development indicators. The aim of the booklet is to make the indicators readily accessible and enable people to judge where changes for the better or worse are occurring. Compared with the position in 1999, 53 measures show improvement and 11 show deterioration.

Free copies of Sustainable development indicators in your pocket 2007 are available from Defra Publications, Admail 6000, London, SW1A 2XX and is also presented on the sustainable development website: http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

Guidance for staff training

A new good practice guide to help employers work to improve staff skills and training has been published by the Department for Business, CBI, TUC and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. The guidance is intended to inspire UK employers and workers to engage in effective two-way dialogue on training and skills, to assess staff training needs and consider how training can fill an organisation's skills gap.

Skills Minister David Lammy said, "Effective dialogue over skills is a win-win for employers and staff, leading to a more committed and innovative workforce, enhanced productivity, and ultimately a stronger economy and fairer society. "

Further information on the publication and case studies can be found at http://berr.gov.uk/employment/employement-legislation/ice/workplace-dialogue/index.html

Social Responsibility

The International Standards Organisation is developing a new standard, ISO 26000 that will give guidance in social responsibility. The developing standard has just moved from the working draft stage to a committee draft stage. The working draft identified some key topics that need to be addressed:
- International norms of behaviour
- Nature of reference to social responsibility initiatives

- Nature of reference to government
- Sphere of influence (including issues relating to value chain and supply chain)
- Picking and choosing (including issues pertaining to relevance and significance and prioritisation)

The standard is not expected to be published until September 2010.

If you need help before then, Business Link can provide you with advice. According to them, Corporate Social Responsibility has an impact on all areas of your business:

- Suppliers – choose them carefully, trading with suppliers who pollute the environment could be as irresponsible are doing so yourself
- Employees – responsible organisations need to do more than just comply with the legal requirements
- Local Community – how does your business affect the local community and should you be more actively involved
- Environment – what can you do to reduce pollution and waste

A guide is available that covers these areas and also highlights the benefits of corporate social responsibility – it should not just be seen as a cost to the business. Again, Business Link has identified a range of business benefits:

- Consumers and companies often favour suppliers that demonstrate social responsibility and are seen as ethical businesses
- Ethical products can sell at premium prices
- Reducing waste and emissions can save you money by reducing your energy bills and waste disposal costs
- Working with the community can provide positive and free advertising
- Employees are often easier to recruit and are more motivated if they feel they are working for an ethical company.

Another way of demonstrating commitment is to obtain ISO 14001, the environmental management system standard. If you are already accredited to ISO 9001, then you will find there are many overlaps between the standards that make it easier to understand. This is an approach that demonstrates your commitment to reducing pollution and waste.

For further information on the development of the ISO 26000 standard on Social Responsibility please visit www.iso.org/sr. The working documents are publically accessible at www.iso.org/wgsr

A guide to Corporate Social Responsibility is available to download from www.businesslink.gov.uk

ISO 17021:2006 changes

On the 15th September, the transition period for the new standard EN ISO/IEC 17021:2006 (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems) ends. ISO 17021 is the ISO standard which gives the requirements for certification bodies delivering all types of management system certification.

Changes to this standard means that many Certification bodies will be requesting the following information as a result of an external audit.

- Any Non-conformance Notes (NCRs) raised will need to be reviewed by Senior Management and agreement determined over corrective action
- The proposed corrective and preventive action will need to be completed on a Certificate Body form and sent to the Certification body

This is probably no bad thing as it makes sure that:

- The corrective action hasn't been overlooked, thus avoiding it being raised to a major at the next visit
- The certification body has accepted as suitable your corrective action.

For further information, please speak to your assessor

39th World Standards Day

The 39th World Standards Day is 14 October 2008 and the message for this year is "Intelligent and sustainable buildings". Building and construction is now one of the largest industry sectors in the world and affects all three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environment.

The World Standard's Day message comes from the leaders of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). It says "International consensus on standards for climate change mitigation, energy saving, environmental terminology, environmental performance, environmental declaration of building products, energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission accounting and verification provides a firm foundation for designers and architects, engineers, owners and government authorities to develop sustainable buildings". It concludes with "International standards help to ensure not only basic quality and safety requirements, but also the incorporation of new technologies for the construction and operation of intelligent and sustainable buildings"

If you would like further information, please visit www.iso.org

British Standards for SPC charts

Two new standards have been published that complement BS 5702 – 1:2001 Guide to SPC charts for variables – part 1 Charts for mean, range and standard deviation. They are:
BS 5702 – 2:2008 – Guide to SPC charts for variables – Part 2 Charts for individual values
BS 5702 – 3:2008 – Guide to SPC charts for variables – Part 3 Charting techniques for short runs and small mixed batches
These standards aim to help organisations ensure consistent, predicable, capable and reliable processes.

Gender Gap in Learning

According to research by the learning and skills council (LSC) women are more enthusiastic about learning and skills than men. Apparently, in the same way that men are less likely to go to the doctor or ask for directions, they are also less likely to seek advice about increasing their skills.

However, one of the main barriers to adult learning is still money. To combat this, the LSC have developed the Adult Learning Grant which provides up to £30 a week to help with the extra costs that learning can bring. Janet Jackson, Partnership Director at the LSC has said, "It's very interesting to see these differences between the sexes when it comes to adult learning and, even more so, to understand the foundations for such contradictory attitudes.".

For further information please visit www.direct.gov.uk/alg