

Kaizen events are not a new concept. They can produce quick, positive changes to a process and promote a feeling of empowerment to employees. Scaled up to a higher level, they are a means to eradicate waste caused by interdepartmental handoffs and produce better system solutions to end customer's needs

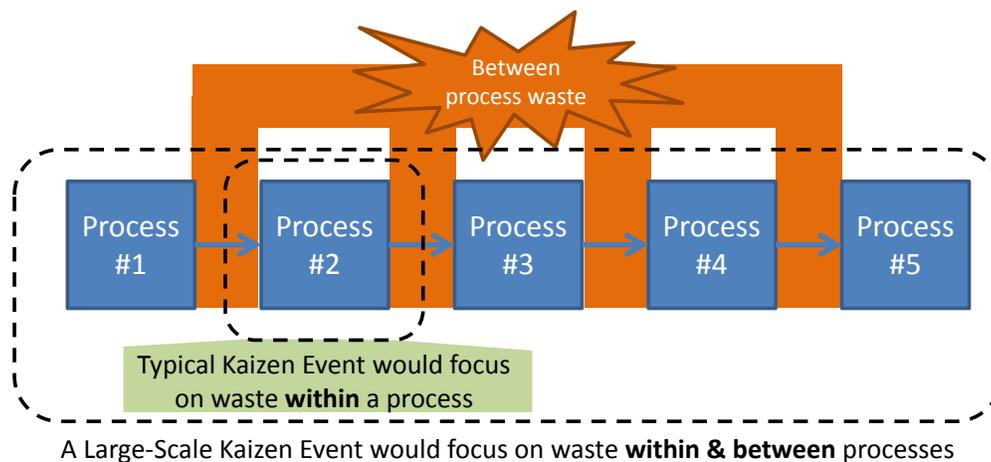


## Large-Scale Kaizen Events

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Kaizen or blitz events have been a valuable, results focused technique leveraged by Lean Six Sigma practitioners to make “good” changes to processes in a short period of time. The events consist of assembling a group of 5-10 individuals for up to 5 days to focus on a process and purge as much of the waste( and thus cost) as possible in order for it to better meet the needs of the customer. The advantages of this compressed improvement activity are several; 1) Dedicated focus in consecutive days without outside interruption is much more time efficient than recurring meetings and thus produce results in less time, 2) The changes are created and decided upon by the people **in the process** as opposed to being dictated by management 3) Employees obtain a higher sense of empowerment when they can design their work.

In today's business world where return on investment in a timely period is a paramount concern to leaders, Kaizen events continue to be a great weapon in a belts arsenal. Scale that concept up so that the scope is an entire value stream, and you have a powerful, process changing approach. Where typical events are focused on a single process **within** a department, a significant amount of waste occurs in **between** processes.



Functional and/or organization barriers often impede the flow of value due to handoffs and unclear requirements from downstream departments. Assemble a sample of people from all the processes along the value stream in a **Large-Scale** Kaizen Event and some amazing things happen. Many individuals along the value stream have never sat in a room together and discussed the process. This internal customer-supplier interaction enables a clear understanding of timing and content of information passed between departments. Processes can then be disassembled and waste eradicated since value in the eyes of the internal customer is

clear. Additionally, better system solutions emerge that consider the needs of the end customer instead of suboptimal solutions that might improve a given departments performance.

As an example, Avior Group Associates recently lead a team in a healthcare organization through an event focused on the hiring and recruitment process. The existing process failed to meet stakeholder needs in a number of ways. First, the process took too long – an average of 52 days from requisition approval to hire. Secondly, 28% of the people hired did not make it past 365 calendar days of employment. Since the recruiting, hiring, and on-boarding process is costly (~\$10k/person), a significant financial opportunity was present. This process, while primarily owned by human resources involved all departments as well as the supplier of the recruiting software. Members across the value stream assembled for 3 days to redesign the process.

Prior to this point, the team had done a significant amount of pre-work; collecting data, mapping the current process, and gaining a deeper understanding of why the process produces defects(defect = new employees that do not make it past one year of employment). Without this pre-work done, the team may have spent a significant amount of time solving the wrong problem!

During the event, the team began by re-familiarizing themselves with the current state process and the data collected thus far. Then beginning with the “end” in mind, or the outcome of each major process block, the team redesigned each part by brainstorming better, waste free ways to achieve the outcome. Finally, the whole process was “glued” together to form a new, streamlined process.

The new, Future State process has a number of significant changes over the Current State process as listed below.

1. Improved screening mechanisms moved much earlier in the process to eliminate unsuitable candidate as early as possible before more expensive and time consuming means are utilized
2. Planning discussion held before requisition is posted between recruiter and hiring manager to agree on specifics of candidate requirements, screening questions, job posting markets, timeline
3. Timing of events from posting date agreed upon between recruiter and hiring manager to provide predictability of major elements in process, ie, closing date of posting, interview time block, targeted orientation date, targeted start date.
4. A redesigned requisition form in the recruiting software that is simpler (went from 6 to 2 pages!) and combines improvements from new requisition approval process
5. Identification of interview team early in process so that training can occur when needed and behavioral based interviewing questions can be selected.
6. Emphasis on stating the non-negotiable elements of the position (ie hours and days) at multiple points in the process

The new future state process, currently in the improve phase, has proven to reduce the recruiting and hiring cycle time. First year retention data will take a while to collect, but anecdotally hiring managers are claiming to get better candidates passed to them saving their valuable time. As a side benefit, the comprehensive review of the process revealed several other opportunities that became Yellow Belt projects for other employees.