



CASE STUDY

You want to transform your workplace and achieve some step changes in operational performance, but you've only got seven days to spare. Mission impossible? Not if you embrace Kaizen Blitz, says Worldwide Business Solution's Managing Director Joseph Turnbull.

Putting on the Blitz

The workforce at a leading Auto/Heavy Engineering plant in Coventry (component manufacturers for the auto/heavy engineering industry) must have felt they'd been caught up in a whirlwind of process improvement. One week their cylinder-manufacturing cell has a lead-time of six days, the next it's down to one and a half. Distance travelled reduces from 186 metres to 20, and machine set-up time is virtually halved. What they in fact experienced was Kaizen Blitz.

"Kaizen Blitz is about delivering the same improvements that you would expect to see from a conventional world class manufacturing project, but in seven days rather than 10 to 12 weeks," says Worldwide Business Solution's Joseph Turnbull. He developed the methodology using the experience gained from several business improvement assignments. "Many in the manufacturing industry, especially the auto sector, need to improve their operation right now, not in six months' time. They're looking for a rapid step change in performance."

If you're thinking a seven day metamorphosis sounds just too good to be true, then you're of the same mind as the management team of this company during initial discussions with Worldwide Business Solutions about how to deliver immediate benefits when we first told them of the idea. Earlier in the year they'd worked with Worldwide Business Solutions on a 10 week transformation of their piston and glands manufacturing cell, and had seen some impressive results: lead time cut from



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30 hours to eight, work in progress down from 300 pieces to 60, and raw materials reduced from 430 to 100. How could similar goals be met in a tenth of the time?



“People can be slightly sceptical to begin with, and I think they’re understandably a little scared when they contemplate the rate of change that we’re talking about,” says Joseph. “It’s a very intense week and you need people willing to put in 12 hours a day plus. But motivation was never an issue at this company; they were always fired up. A big part of our role is to instill in people a ‘can do’ philosophy, to get them to sort problems then and there, because there’s no time to do it any other way.”

After a two day training session for the team members - “drawn from across the company, it’s the best way to generate ideas” - the five day Blitz begins. The team rapidly works its way through a sequence of closely controlled phases: data



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gathering and analysis redesign of processes and layout, change implementation, testing and fine-tuning. The final day arrives, and it's time to present to the Board. "That's a very powerful day for the team and it's great for them to show just how much they've achieved."

His role in the action-packed week, and that of his three colleagues, has been largely to prompt and facilitate people to come to the right solutions. "There's not the time for great debate and discussion. We have to help people to the right answers quite rapidly, by offering them our skills and experience and giving them the tools and techniques."

It helps, he says, that Worldwide Business Solutions has worked a lot in the auto industry. "Clients expect us to know their business in detail, which we do." They also expect a hands-on approach. "We're not sat back in the training room waiting for the team to feed us information. We're out there with them on the shop floor, helping move machines into new layouts, organising the workplace, whatever it takes. That's the way we like to work."





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However spectacular the improvements, which Kaizen Blitz has delivered to this company and others, Joseph does not suggest that it always will, or should, replace the traditional project, based approach. “Both approaches have their place,” he argues. “But for companies who need to realise benefits quickly, and who prefer the short-term pain of dedicating intensive resource for a week to spreading it over the life of a longer project, this has got to be the answer.”

The Kaizen Blitz programmes are led by WWBS Group Consultants who have extensive experience implementing rapid change and improvement programmes across manufacturing industries.

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***“If it can’t be implemented over a weekend
it’s too complex”***

Tom Peters