

Café Kaizen:

A Fast and Effective Problem Solving Technique for Agile Teams

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GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AND THE PROBLEM-SOLVING DIAGRAM

Café Kaizen is a group dynamic that can be performed by any team and conducted by a facilitator who understands its principles and operation. However, better and effective results can be gotten if different techniques and models from NLP (Neuro Linguistic-Programming) are used by the facilitator: eg. Rapport, Meta Model, Structure of Change, Well-Formed Conditions for Outcomes, Logical Levels, S.C.O.R.E. and Conflict Resolution).

RESOURCES

To organize a Café Kaizen event you will need:

- An adequate place for the number of participants (≤ 30)
- The specific problem-solving diagram (banner)
- Post-its and marker pens to write ideas and observations
- Team members to work as “investigators”
- Coffee, Snacks & Beverages

PREPARATION

To run a Café Kaizen event you will need:

- To setup the day and time (preferable by the morning)
08:30 – 09:00 Welcome Coffee (warm up)
09:00 – 10:30 Problem-Solving Dynamic
- Invite interested parties
 - The team facing the main problems
 - Other teams that can face the same problems
 - Volunteers that can help to solve the problem

BASIC STEPS

- During the welcome coffee explain the dynamic (if the first time) and identify a specific problem to be investigated by the participants
- People will work as in a brainstorming of a full team of investigators
- Start discussing the symptoms of the actual scenario, considering the negative result, environment (where and when), roles (who), behaviors or attitudes (what) and knowledge and skills (how)
- Follow to the outcomes of the desired scenario, considering the same analysis of the actual scenario
- Investigate positive and negative side effects of the transformation, reframing negative observations with constraints
- Identify possible causes that can hinder the team to move from the actual to the desired scenario
- Ask participants to think about possible resources that can help moving from causes to desired effects
- Ask for two volunteers to take the responsibility about the improvement initiative (Kaizen execution)



CONSIDERATIONS

- Typically, ideas registered in post-its are manifestations of individual and collective beliefs
- It's difficult to keep the proposed analysis sequence because people expose their ideas in different ways
- Declarations about "non-symptoms" (the absence of) are typically beliefs about the desired scenario
- Trying to identify the main causes before the desired scenario can result in conflicts and blaming
- Finishing the analysis with beliefs on undesired effects can result in someone contrary to the transformation
- Always make specific questions when conducting the event or managing conflicts between participants
- Be specific to get outcomes reachable by until two months of actions
- After the event, write a summary about the problem, scenarios and selected resources

