It was in 2005 that we launched the 1st Kaizen Institute annual Kaizen event (in collaboration with KAM) in Kenya, and it seems like yesterday!

We are pleased to share that we just concluded a well attended 11th version of this annual event!

Yes it has been 11 years on the tort! 11 years of Sharing, Learning, Networking – with one thread binding all those who attend – The KAIZEN Spirit! The spirit of Continual Improvement.

The theme this year was: Monozukuri for Hitozukuri
(“Product Excellence through Employee Excellence”)

This year we had case study presentations from following organizations:

1. Kariki Farms,
2. Synresins,
3. Associated Battery Manufacturers,
4. Coninx,
5. Ubbink and
6. Transcorp Hilton.

The objective of these presentations was to present & share their experience with “developing employee excellence:”

The opening key note was delivered by Prof. Bitange Ndemo, Business School University of Nairobi and a fantastic one day learning session – value packed by Dr. Gwendolyn Galsworth on the following topic: “Empowering Employees Through Workplace Visuality.”
Companies that have not embraced the Kaizen concept to do so, as it is one of the ways through which companies can work towards elimination of waste, reduction of costs of production and ultimately enhance the competitiveness of Kenyan firms. Kaizen is all about embracing continuous improvement. Over the years a number of companies have developed interest in understanding this Japanese approach to production.

Companies that have embraced the Kaizen principles have experienced among other things:

- Increased productivity through elimination of needless movements within the plant,
- Improved cash flow through application of Just-in-Time manufacturing which eliminates needless inventory and stock,
- Improved performance of machines through application of autonomous maintenance
- Better deployment of policy among all staff.

Delivering the keynote address, Bitange Ndemo, Professor at the Business School University of Nairobi reiterated that change is an everyday phenomenon which needs to be embraced since new innovations and technology come to make things easier and more efficient. “To remain relevant you must continuously improve the product that you are making. If you are not part of the change you will become irrelevant. Cultures keeps changing we cannot remain with the old methods of doing things and expect new results. You must embrace continuous improvement, embrace change and that is what Kaizen is all about,” he said.

Real cases from Kaizen Practicing Companies:

The conference featured case study presentations by some of the leading Kaizen practicing companies including:

1. Kariki Farms
2. Synresins
3. Associated Battery Manufacturers
4. Coninx
5. Ubbink
6. Transcorp Hilton.

The session provided for peer learning and sharing on best practice. The need to have an open mind towards change, awareness creation and training, involvement of everyone in the company to own the process were highlighted as some of the key success factors in the implementation of Kaizen.
From the Guru of Visual Workplace:

Dr. Gwendolyn Galsworth

Day two of the conference featured a training session on “Empowering Employees Through Workplace Visuality.”

The visual work place is not about posters and signs but rather the language of lean production made visual. The purpose of the visual approach is to identify and eliminate deficits in information through visual solutions covering all work venues and intentional environments. A visual workplace is a self-ordering, self-explaining, self-regulating and self-improving work environment where what is supposed to happen happens on time, every tie, because of visual devices.

Background

Since 1986 when Masaaki Imai’s Book “Kaizen, the Key to Japan’s Competitiveness” was published, the term Kaizen has come to be accepted as a key concept of management and has been applied throughout the world in various industries and sectors.

Since 2005 KAM has partnered with Kaizen Institute - a consultancy group founded by Masaaki Imai, to create awareness of this approach in this country. This has been done through this annual conference as well as firm level interventions championed by the Kaizen Institute. A number of KAM members have embraced this concept and are reaping great benefits out of applying it to their business.

The Kaizen Strategy consists of a set of tools to identify and eliminate waste in a production system. The Kaizen tools assist firms put in place certain systems within the workplace that reduce and eliminate waste. These are firm level interventions that rarely take a lot of money but lead to great results. Typical results of companies adopting Kaizen approaches include:

1. 50-70% reduction in processing time;
2. 20-40% increase in efficiency;
3. 20-40% savings in costs;
4. 40-60% reduction in errors;
5. 50% release of space;
6. Significant improvement in team spirit and morale;
7. Empowering human resource and
8. Discovery of new capabilities

The quest for excellence is Kaizen..Continual Improvement..