KAIZEN® Public Tour – Kyushu 2014

Fourteen participants representing different industries from Belgium, Canada, Dubai, Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Poland joined the tour in October. On the first morning the participants visited a Lexus factory where they were very amazed to see the finely synchronised mixed model production line in full swing. The different continuous internal pull logistics loops, visual management and the layout and set-up of individual work areas are truly impressive.

In the afternoon they visited bathroom-ware manufacturer TOTO where they saw very good examples of 5S, visual management as well as numerous small KAIZEN initiatives that are coming from the frontline.

On the second day they visited circuit board manufacturer, HOKS where they were privileged to be guided by their retired manager and director, Mr Tsuyoshi who shared their journey and enthusiastically explained their shop floor as they walked around. A key feature of HOKS is that they’ve removed most of their chairs so that everyone, including office workers use stand-up desks. The participants saw great visual management, u-shaped cells and flow and of course great 5S.

In the afternoon the participants visited Omron where 50% of their workforce are handicapped. It was amazing to see how they rely on KAIZEN initiatives to customise individual workstations so that operators with handicaps can be integrated into the operation. This was a good reminder that physical equipment and ergonomics can enhance manual input.

On day three the participants had a debriefing and group discussion where participants shared their own experience. Then they visited Saishunkan cosmetics. The company produces and sells eight products via their outbound telephone sales team. The entire 800 strong customer-facing team and their support is located on a single floor! This is something that must be seen to fully appreciate. Very good visual management and absolute focus on the voice of the customer.

On day four the participants visited the Honda motorcycle factory where they saw the iconic Goldwing production line in action. Their KAIZEN suggestion scheme is well organised and embedded across the entire plant. Their target is one suggestion implemented per employee per month. They especially enjoyed watching and listening at the final inspection station where the inspector takes the motorcycles on a stationary roller test drive through all the gears.

On the last day the participants visited the Daihatsu small engine manufacturing and assembly plant. This was one of their favourite visits, because the plant is quite new and the lay-out and flow was concentrated into an easy to observe area. It was fantastic to see and to be able to time the full mizusumashi cycles (water spider or internal logistics). Brilliant lay-out and design of workstations!

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