

Lean Training System Companion Article

By Jeff Hajek, Founder of Velaction

The Lean Training System is our extensive solution to continuous improvement training. This article comes from our Gotta Go Lean Blog, and complements the training modules. See our entire list of article and many additional features at <http://www.GottaGoLean.com>



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If you are in a Lean company, you probably already have a fairly well defined kaizen process. After all, an effective *kaizen* is one of the most powerful continuous improvement tools in your Lean kit.

Like all things, though, your *kaizen* process probably has room for improvement. I've compiled a list of 9 tips to make your *kaizen* process more effective.

9 Tips to Make Your Kaizen Process More Effective

1. **Get people back into the meeting room on time.** The number one cause of waste in a *kaizen* is that the team rarely arrives on time. Use an incentive to get people back when they are supposed to. For example, I've used a 'time bank' that ticks down when people are late. Whatever is left over is how early the team can leave at the end of the day. I've also passed out lunch coupons right at the start of the meeting—anyone who was late didn't get one.
2. **Put a printer in the kaizen room.** You'll save a lot of time by not needing to run out of the room to get printouts.

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9 Tips for Running a More Effective Kaizen

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3. **Use life-sized simulations.** In my last newsletter, I talked about modeling your ideas. You should also consider using full-sized simulations. What looks good on paper doesn't always work in real life. Find a big open area—an auditorium, empty work area, or even a parking lot, and tape off the layout of your new floor plan. Push material carts through and stand like you are working to see if there really is enough space.
4. **Act with facts.** Make sure you have solid information before making changes. Facts and data will substantially improve your *kaizen* process, not only now but in the future. In new Lean implementations, or ones with considerable resistance, every mistake acts as an indictment of Lean. Minimize the ammunition for the naysayers.
5. **Don't force a tool where it doesn't fit.** Not every tool works in every area, and some processes just aren't ready for the advanced tools. [Chaku-chaku lines](#), for example, are great, but won't work without [jidoka](#) and [Standard Work](#) already firmly in place.
6. **Right-size and JIT your training.** There are many ways to train. Seminars and long-duration training are great tools when people are thirsty for knowledge about Lean, but for most people, they just need the information to help them with the task at hand. Package your training to provide that training right when it is needed.
7. **Refuel your team.** The *kaizen* process can be draining because it is usually time consuming and it uses different parts of the brain than the daily work does. I've noticed over the years that people seem to stay sharper when they eat healthier, so provide nutritious options in addition to the standard box of donuts. And, of course...*kaizens* run on caffeine!

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8. **Have tools and supplies available.** It sounds simple, but you'd be surprised how often people show up for *kaizen* events with nothing to write with. Have paper and pens available. Teams also waste a lot of time tracking down Velcro, scissors, laminating material, clay, label makers, and the like. Have a kit set up for your *kaizen* teams to use, and have them refill it after each event (with [kanban cards](#), of course!).
9. **Require responses to invitations.** Don't settle for just a 'Yeah, I'm coming'. And certainly don't just assume a team member received your charter via email. Have them fill out specific information to show they have read the instructions. Make them fill out the time and location of the event, any safety equipment they may need, what they should wear (office workers often aren't dressed appropriately for production areas), and what the purpose of the event is. Basically, have each team member give you a quick [briefback](#).

Try these tips in your next *kaizen* event and see if you can squeeze a little improvement out of your *kaizen* process. And please, leave a comment and let me know your suggestions on how to make *kaizen* events more effective.

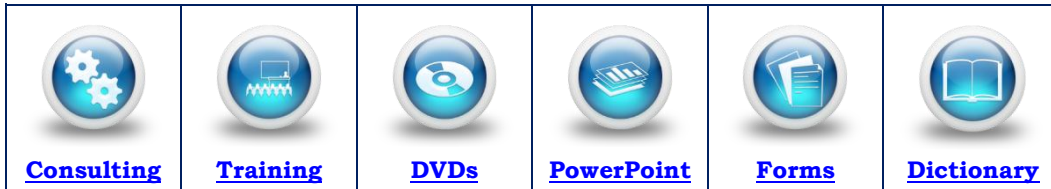
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About Jeff Hajek

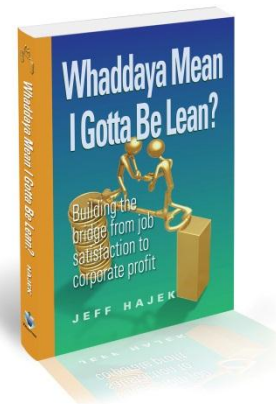


Jeff Hajek is a master black belt, the author of the award-winning book, [Whaddaya Mean I Gotta Be Lean?](#), and the founder of Velaction Continuous Improvement. He has over two decades of leadership and Lean experience, which he blogs about at www.GottaGoLean.com

Jeff has worked in a wide variety of roles and industries. His broad experience and extensive contact with frontline employees gives him a unique perspective that helps him create grassroots support for a company's improvement initiatives.

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Contact Information

Velaction Continuous Improvement, LLC
P.O. Box 14700
Mill Creek, WA 98082

1. 800.670.5805

1.425.939.1604 (Fax)

Info@Velaction.com