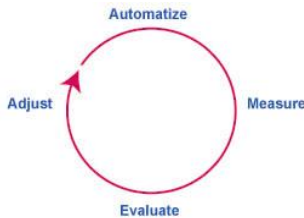


Kaizen Korner

Kaizen: A Japanese word for "change for the better" or "improvement"; the English translation is "continuous incremental improvement" or "continual improvement". In Chinese, Gai Shan means good change for the community; generating benefits for everyone.

How Much Did You Improve?



Kai = Good Zen = Change: Good Change or Good Way

After Measure in this virtuous circle, comes Evaluate.

Was it a valid test?

Suppose did our five minute run test, and we went farther. Did we really improve? If we are to believe this, we have to be sure our measurement is real.

Were the circumstances the same? For example: Did we have a following wind this time? Was it cooler? Or warmer? Did we feel better – and why? If the answer is “Yes, this test was the same as the last one”, then how much did we improve? If the circumstances were better, then we should note the improvement and incorporate the new circumstances into our test protocol.

Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics!

Given the right scale or the right ratio, you can exaggerate or minimise differences, for example, if a number increases from 10, 000 to 10, 100, we could say that “It bounced up by a hundred” or we could say “there was only a 1% gain”. In our context, the closer to the original numbers you are, the more likely you are to get a real measure of gain (or loss). Also in our context, the time between measures is important, as is the trend between measures.

Percentages

Here are two different percentages, based on successive test results, A and B where A = 2000m and B = 2200m:

$B/A \times 100$ - a straight comparison: We are now running at 110% of our previous speed. Impressive!

$(B-A)/A \times 100$ – measures the difference: We ran 10% faster. A very good gain.

What if we performed less well?

Suppose did our five minute run test, and we didn’t make it to our previous marker? We ask again, were the circumstances the same?

For example: Did we have a head wind this time? Was it cooler? Or warmer? Did we feel worse – and why? If the answer is “Yes, the test was the same”, then we have a valid decrease and we have to look at our training to see how we can improve it.

If the test was the same, but the circumstances were different, then we have to analyse our test context and decide how to adjust it to improve the test’s reliability.

Trends are Best

Because individual test results can vary due to uncontrollable circumstances like weather, mood, hormones, companions, parents, etc., it is better to do the comparisons over a number of tests, each separated by a chunk of training designed to improve the test result. You need at least three points for a trend, so you need to keep your test protocol as constant as possible while you look for that upward trend.