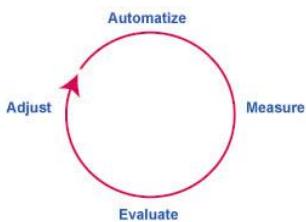


Kaizen Korner

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.

So, it's not home sweet home; adjust!



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

I have this pointy little aphorism on my kitchen wall, a gift from my wife when I left home to come to Alberta. The simple truth underlying it is this: Get over it; get on with making it better. It fits the kaizen principle of focusing on improving the process, rather than dwelling on the outcome. Sure, everyone likes to wallow in self pity once in a while, it might even feel good if you can find a sympathetic audience, but, will it improve your shooting? No way.

How much should you adjust?

A scientific answer would be "Enough to make a measurable difference" and "One thing at a time" so that you can attribute any effects to the change. In the real world of Biathlon, this is often difficult. For example, if you adjust the stock length of your rifle, you may end up adjusting your rear sights to keep the same sight picture and/or the front stop and sling to keep the same position and sling tension. Some changes, like trying a new front aperture insert to improve the sight picture, fit this scientific model. Your group gets bigger, smaller or doesn't change. When you measure the group size, the change tells you clearly if the adjustment is in the right direction or not.

How often should you adjust?

As soon as the effect of the last change stabilizes, i.e. when you are in a position to make another reliable measurement. This can be interpreted as "When the new way is automatized."

Change disrupts habitual patterns. When someone makes us change our habits we often feel uncomfortable. Expect this with training changes. Not always; some changes immediately feel great, especially early in the learning curve, but quite often, when we change an already automated process, our body doesn't like it.

In this case, performance will actually go down before it improves. When will this improvement show up? When the new, changed procedure/technique is automatized.

The next step in our kaizen circle is "automatization".