

incremental improvement

focusing on smaller steps/solutions that slowly but surely move you toward success



Improvement doesn't have to come only from big, sweeping changes. While it is sometimes necessary to tackle big problems using big projects, this is not always the case.

Kaizen is a Japanese term meaning change for the better or *continuous* improvement. It is a highly-used business philosophy that concerns the processes that continuously improve operations and involve all employees.

The core tenets of incremental improvement of Kaizen include:

- Standardizing an action or process so that it's repeatable and organized
- Focusing on measurability and evaluating progress using data
- Comparing results against your requirements (did you deliver on your promise?)
- Innovating new and better ways to achieve similar results
- Responding to changing circumstance and evolving your methods over time

But as an individual, can this help me in my work life and even in my personal life? YES.

ASK YOURSELF WHAT SMALL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE. As you start to identify areas for improvement at work or in your life, the key is to *start with bite-sized changes*. Think tiny.

But incremental improvements over time are much more likely to stick (as opposed to sweeping, cataclysmic changes), starting small seems increasingly appealing, although it takes patience.

If, for example, you're trying to boost your productivity at the office so you don't have to work through lunch, brainstorm what *minimally disruptive* changes might help you accomplish that. Maybe it means arriving to work 15 minutes early each morning so you're not rushing, or setting an alarm on your phone to remind you to take a break.

SET ASIDE TIME TO REVIEW WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED. When we get busy, we don't take time to evaluate what's working and what isn't.

But for any improvements to "take", you need to reflect on *how* things are going, especially when you sense a friction point. It's important to strike a balance between optimization and appreciation by integrating both positive and negative experiences. Try a twist on the typical daily gratitude practice:

What was the "high point" of your day?

What was your "low point" of the day?

What could you improve upon for next time?

What did you learn?