

Book Review – Society for Health Systems Newsletter, January 2008

The Kaizen Event Planner: Achieving Rapid Improvement in Office, Service, and Technical Environments

Karen Martin, a popular speaker at SHS conferences and workshops, has collaborated with Mike Osterling to write a new book.

Much of Karen's style of presenting is demonstrated in the writing. The book provides simple, clear explanations. It gives you the words to use when you are training team members who are not performance improvement professionals or engineers.

The Kaizen Event Planner focuses on the process for making change. It begins with a brief section on Kaizen philosophy and explains how Kaizen events fit into a lean culture. Next it thoroughly reviews the steps for planning a Kaizen event; followed by how to facilitate the event. The book concludes by discussing activities needed to follow through with Kaizen event implementations and how to sustain a Kaizen culture.

The book provides tips and templates for facilitators. The templates are provided in electronic files on a CD so you do not have to create them yourself. The templates serve as a checklist to make sure you have covered all of the points. The templates include agendas, planning steps and communication plans. The templates provide not only time savings, but ensure you cover all of the necessary elements. The book does not cover lean tools, but provides references for this information.

The Kaizen Event Planner walks readers through applying metrics to process maps, similar to the metrics used in value stream maps. Then readers are taught how to systematically analyze current state maps--often a sticking point for facilitators. This prevents the common frustration team members experience wondering why they spent so much time creating a current state map that is then ignored when the facilitator asks them to move on to creating a future state map.

This book is a valuable resource not only to readers involved in Kaizen events, but to all facilitating performance improvement. Many of the tips and techniques can be applied regardless of the improvement methodology used.

Book review by Connie Allen