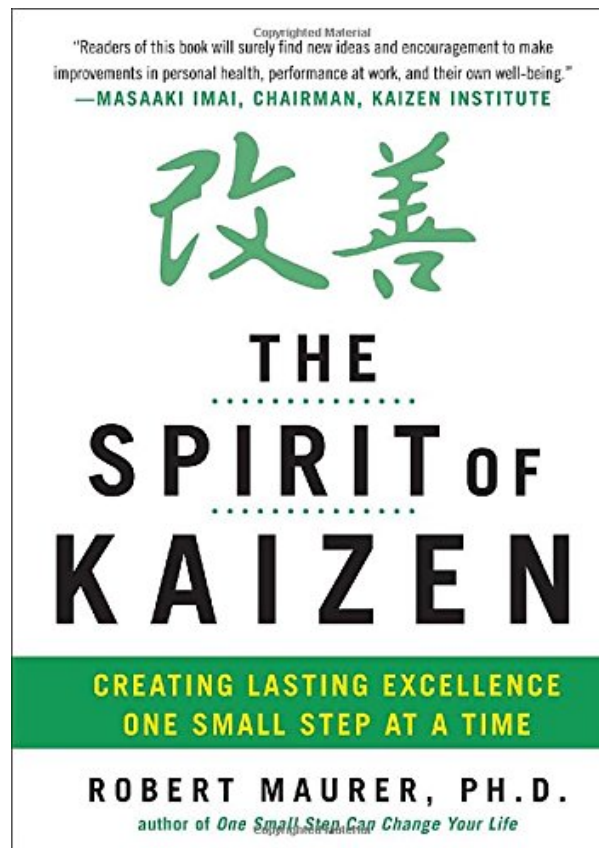


# THE SPIRIT OF KAIZEN: CREATING LASTING EXCELLENCE ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME BY ROBERT MAURER



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"Readers of this book will surely find new ideas and encouragement to make improvements in personal health, performance at work, and their own well-being."  
—MASAAKI IMAI, CHAIRMAN, KAIZEN INSTITUTE

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CREATING LASTING EXCELLENCE  
ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME

ROBERT MAURER, PH.D.  
*author of One Small Step Can Change Your Life*

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# **THE SPIRIT OF KAIZEN: CREATING LASTING EXCELLENCE ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME BY ROBERT MAURER PDF**

Discover the power of KAIZEN to make lasting and powerful change in your organization

“Maurer uses his knowledge of the brain and human psychology to show what I have promoted for the past three decades—that continuous improvement is built on the foundation of people courageously using their creativity. Kaizen is much more than a world-class management practice; it is a technique to remove fear from our mind’s mind, enabling us to take small steps to better things. The process of change starts with awareness and desire in our minds and then leads to action and change in the physical world. Readers of this book will surely find new ideas and encouragement to make improvements in personal health, performance at work, and their own well-being.”

—Masaaki Imai, Chariman, Kaizen Institute

**KAIZEN: The Small-Step Step Solution for You and Your Company**

Today’s businesses love the idea of revolutionary, immediate change. But major “disruptive” efforts often fail because radical change sets off alarms in our brains and shuts down our power to think clearly and creatively.

There is, however, a more effective path to change. Change that is lasting and powerful. Change that begins with one small step . . .

It’s The Spirit of Kaizen—a proven system for implementing small, incremental steps that can have a big impact in reaching your goals. This step-by-step guide from renowned psychologist and consultant Dr. Robert Maurer shows you how to:

- Lower costs?by offering little rewards
- Raise quality?by reducing mistakes
- Manage difficult people? one step at a time
- Boost morale and productivity? in five minutes a day
- Implement big ideas?through small but steady actions
- Sell more?in less time

Filled with practical tips and ready-to-use tools for managers, innovators, and entrepreneurs, The Spirit of Kaizen is the essential handbook for a changing world. You’ll learn how to think outside the suggestion box, remove mental blindfolds, manage stress with one-minute exercises, and handle rising health-care costs. You’ll discover the “small step” secrets for dealing with all kinds of people, from tough bosses and listless workers to stubborn clients and fussy customers.

These simple but powerful techniques can be applied to almost any workplace situation, especially when you’re trying to navigate the stormy waters of radical change, high-pressure deadlines, and cutthroat

competition. These are the same methods of small, continual improvement that have been tested by the largest companies, such as Boeing, Toyota, and the U.S. Navy?methods that will work for you, too.

No matter how big the obstacle or how big the dream, The Spirit of Kaizen has a small-step solution to help you succeed.

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- 192 pages

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11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Practical, proven advice that really works

By Mark Graban

Individuals and organizations often try to find one major improvement - a "home run," if you will. Someone might say, "I want to lose 50 pounds" or "we need to develop a new product that doubles revenue." Goals like that might be scary... and for good reason, as described in the new book by Robert Maurer, PhD: "The Spirit of Kaizen: Creating Lasting Excellence One Small Step at a Time."

There's one action that can lead to lots of little improvements (and, eventually, to innovation) - the adoption of the "kaizen" mindset.

Robert Maurer is a faculty member in behavioral sciences at UCLA and the University of Washington. I previously reviewed his earlier book "One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way" and did a podcast interview with him about that book, which primarily focused on the application of "kaizen" (Japanese for "good change") style improvement approaches to his patients and their personal lives.

He wrote about how "small steps" in the style of kaizen (as practiced in the industrial world) could help individuals lose weight and change other personal behaviors. Instead of telling an overweight patient to start exercising an hour a day (which would cause the "fight or flight" instinct to kick in because it's a scary request), Dr. Maurer would ask a person to start exercising by just walking in place for the length of 30 seconds. This wasn't as scary, so people would try that small step, building enthusiasm and confidence that would allow them to build up to an hour a day. The success rate from starting small was much higher.

In his latest book, Maurer brings these ideas back to the workplace, with stories about how this same kaizen mindset can be applied to improve quality, boost morale, reduce costs, reduce healthcare expenses, and more. The book is focused more on businesses, hospitals, and organizations, rather than individuals - but the understanding of how change happens is based on our own personal brain chemistry and evolution. Maurer calls kaizen "a doable path to innovation" because we're more likely to have big changes occur when we start small. I wrote about similar thoughts from a Japanese hospital CEO back in November.

Maurer describes how the "reptile brain" (the amygdala) in the more complex human brain can help us, as when it's kicking in the powerful "fight or flight" response that's necessary when we are in real danger. The problem with the reptile brain is that the fight or flight response kicks in even when we merely imagine a

dangerous situation or something threatening (such as losing one's job)... and this reptile brain shuts down higher level thought processes and capabilities. So, instead of saying that people shouldn't be afraid of change, we should recognize that large changes (or "radical changes," as he calls them) are scary... it's in our DNA... and we need to work to make changes smaller and, therefore, less scary.

In Chapter 1, Maurer writes of a doctor's office that he taught to use Kaizen. They were, initially, asking for innovation. But Maurer suggested that each person think about "the smallest step possible" that would improve the office. He had two rules:

- 1) The step couldn't cost anything (resources were tight in the struggling office)
- 2) The idea had to benefit the customer (the patient)

Maurer cites the American approach of "Training Within Industry" and the teachings of an American, W. Edwards Deming, in laying out the principles that allowed the clinic to dramatically reduce patient no show rates and improve patient satisfaction - lots of little improvements led to a successful practice. These aren't just Japanese practices. They are human practices that work around the world.

The clinic was hesitant to use kaizen, as are many, because the improvements seem trivial and insignificant. Kaizen and continuous improvement approaches aren't sexy or exciting... but they work. Maurer writes:

"These steps are so small that they may seem useless, but that's why they work. If the amygdala is like an alarm system, small steps are like cat burglars.... Your alarm never goes off.... You retain access to your rational, creative thoughts."

"The Spirit of Kaizen" is a short book (I read it on my flight back from Japan and it didn't take the whole trip), but it's full of examples that reinforce the core kaizen principles and our understanding of how people can embrace and initiate change for the betterment of customers (patients), themselves, and their organizations. The main themes are a bit repetitive, but they're solid and they work: start small (the smallest step possible), expect to stumble along the way, and continue striving to get better.

If there's one new habit to embrace in 2013, let it be kaizen! What's the smallest possible step you can take toward the goal of having a kaizen mindset or a kaizen culture?

If you're interested in kaizen, also check out my latest book, "Healthcare Kaizen: Engaging Front-Line Staff in Sustainable Continuous Improvements."

11 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Best Business Book of 2012

By Michael P. Maslanka

This book is a short and useful guide to kaizen, the idea that small changes can produce big results. When we ask for big goals to be met, our brains shut down. They are overwhelmed. but when we ask "what is the one small thing we can do to get to our goal?", the brain does not get worked up and we can think clearly. A hospital wanted to increase the accuracy of the reports of its radiologists, who work alone. So, they showed them photos of patients awaiting their test results. Accuracy increased 46%. The book also highlights the power of questions to make small improvements: What is the one small thing I can do to (insert goal) that will take no more than (5,3,1) minute a day? He applies these techniques to a variety of areas, including reducing health care costs, boosting sales, and improving quality. While worth the time.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Outstanding -Real world approach to implementing permanent change!!

By Ennoventor

I stumbled on "The spirit of Kaizen" when surfing the audio channel during a long distance Trans-Atlantic flight and could not stop listening. I downloaded the book to my iPad and have bought 10 copies for all my managers.

Robert Maurer adopts a real-world, common sense approach to implementing a quality program without the bells and whistles. The contrasts between the Japanese and American psyches helps the reader bring it home when considering change initiatives particularly in the noisy, competitive and distracted business environments in which we find ourselves today. You should read it together with Chip and Dan Heath's book, "Switch".

Great read.

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