



IN **SIGHTS**

**February 2020:
Change management requires leaps
in thinking**

Changes have always frightened people at first. „Why change when everything is going well?“ is a universal statement. It starts with the little things in everyday life, a new cereal for the children, a new construction site on the way to work, a new instruction at work. For many, it breaks routines that people have become accustomed to. And without giving reasons, such changes are difficult to accept. This is where change management from a business perspective is called for.

It becomes much more difficult if you want to turn those affected into participants. Then an inner struggle arises from the combination of the knowledge that changes are needed and the unwillingness to implement or initiate changes. This very often leads to small changes, visible for the client, visible for the organization, but only with limited efficiency gains. Nevertheless, especially the small steps are an important factor for a successful change management and thus for the success of changes. But only if they are subordinated to a superior goal.

Lean Management the right approach

In the Lean Management approach there are separate terms for both: KAIZEN refers to the continuous, step-by-step improvement of processes and procedures, KAIKAKU to the optimization leap. Both require changes, many small ones or just one larger one. The combination of both is certainly the best way for sustainable optimization: Use KAIZEN until the larger leap (KAIKAKU) is feasible and then implement KAIZEN to secure and further optimization.

But both also stand for optimization from the ground up, the foundation are the current

processes, instructions and recommendations for action. Using the example of an incoming invoice: KAIZEN is used to optimize individual work steps, e.g. by scanning a paper invoice. With KAIKAKU the jump is successful and a mail address for pdf-invoices from suppliers is set up.

From the point of view of change management, both are non-disruptive, sustainable and maximally increase efficiency. In both cases, a process is optimized within a department, within its own boundaries. What happens in the run-up does not seem to be of interest. The changes are based on the current situation and optimize the effort, but not the processes themselves.

Jumps in thinking

When changes occur, the biggest hurdle is to break away from the existing conditions. Under conditions processes, structures and employees are the three core factors. It is not uncommon to see a process change as useful, but the right employee with the right skills is missing. So, one leaves it. And even worse are optimization ideas that eliminate the own task. Who puts an idea on the table that eliminates their own justification for going to work every day? Based on the example of the incoming invoices: Who on the team of incoming invoices asks the question whether credit notes would not be simpler and more efficient?

Such a leap in thinking seems difficult for those concerned, which is understandable. The leap across departmental boundaries always has a taste for delegating tasks to others and is also difficult for many. Barriers can be defused or even removed at this point by appropriate communication about change management.



Increased efficiency through successful change management

However, the macroeconomic challenges - energy efficiency, global competition and shortage of skilled workers - require companies to constantly and disruptively optimize their processes. In particular, the opportunities offered by digitization can be used optimally to increase efficiency. You just have to have the courage to do so.

Leaps in thinking cannot be forced and require a framework. Like brainstorming, where all ideas are allowed and there are no wrong ideas, jumps in thinking require a creative space. There are many methods for this, the right one always depends on the group and the objective. My advice is: take the time to think laterally, to find jumps, to invent new things. And don't forget KAIZEN and KAIKAKU, because every optimization is always the right step. But separate these approaches from the jumps where you calmly question everything. For example, use the 5W method and explore why something is done the way it is done. Hurts sometimes but helps.

As ADCONIA, we are happy to help you ask the right questions and as external observers we can often look beyond our own noses and think outside the box. Please contact us.

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