



## The Times They Are A'Changin' – part 2

*In this second article on change management, Mark Rendell, independent trainer and project manager, proposes a new blend of Kotter and Kaizen to support change in the modern workplace*

In the 1990s, John Kotter described a set of eight steps<sup>1</sup> that aimed to address the reasons why change management often failed in organisations: momentum was lost, the vision became hazy or morale was sapped through lack of evidence of success and poor communication.

Kotter's eight steps represented a leap forward in our understanding of managing change in organisations because the model helps to anticipate and address the *psychological* impacts of change and reminds us that it is people who are both the recipients and *enactors* of successful change in the workplace.

Some ten years earlier, Masaaki Imai<sup>2</sup> distilled a revolution in Japanese change management into 'Kaizen', a philosophy of continual incremental change, developed in the 1980s. It had been successfully implemented in many Japanese businesses and was synonymous with Total Quality Control (TQC).

Kaizen emphasised the *process-driven* aspects of an organisation such as effort, attention to quality, efficiency and performance. It also promoted the belief that evolutionary change that is incremental, applied and demonstrable resulted in long term benefits, the establishment of a strong change-oriented culture and cost efficiencies. Above all, Kaizen focused on the worker and aimed to nurture the 'thinking worker': "...*always looking for better ways to do their work.*"<sup>3</sup>

The Kaizen approach can take between three and ten years for benefits and evidence of cultural change within the organisation to manifest. Contrastingly, Kotter's eight steps can result in successful change in a much shorter period of time if all steps are followed closely (they address head-on anticipated blockages and obstacles at each stage). Kaizen and Kotter can also be used in large scale, organisation-wide contexts, because they deploy system-wide approaches and are person-focused, not system- nor results-focused.

These change approaches (and many others) begin from the same starting point: that change triggers a series of felt psychological and emotional responses that, if not addressed early on in the journey, can derail even the best efforts to manage change. Kotter's eight steps and Kaizen build on this to produce practical models for the *implementation of change* in line with predictable and understandable responses to the change by the people directly involved.

Because of the complementary nature of the Kotter and Kaizen approaches, and the dynamic potential of combining the two to create an *enacted thinking worker*, I describe below a blend of Kotter and Kaizen that can be applied to organisations

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<sup>1</sup> Kotter, Prof. J.P., 1996. *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press

<sup>2</sup> Imai, M., 1986. *Kaizen: the Key To Japan's Competitive Success*, McGraw Hill Publishing

<sup>3</sup> Imai, 1986, p.111.

undergoing change. Kotter's eight steps would be deployed as the *Itinerary* (What to do / Where to do it / the structure) for the transition journey and Kaizen as the *Vehicle* (How to do it / When to do it / the content) by which you get there.

The **Kotter-Kaizen Change Journey** would therefore look something like this:

Step no.	Kotter (WHAT) <i>Itinerary / Route</i>	Kaizen (HOW) <i>Vehicle</i>
1.	Establish a sense of urgency	Make the link between effort and improvement. Reframe the work in terms of continual improvement – invite the workforce to be engines for greater improvement (of the product range and organisation).
2.	Creating a guiding coalition	Deploy a management support system that stimulates and supports people's efforts to improve the processes involved, e.g. suggestion schemes, quality circles, invite participation.
3.	Developing a vision and strategy	'Quality' means quality of the staff not the product. Vision means that quality control starts and ends with training. Everyone is involved. Mistakes are welcomed – they are learning opportunities. The organisation is a total problem-solving environment. Management compiles list of 'problems' to be solved – invites whole workplace to help solve the problems.
4.	Communicating the change vision	The only thing our customers want is quality. We understand quality. We are quality. Think of the customer being the next department in the process – set up customer interfaces <i>within</i> the organisation. Staff are agents of change.
5.	Empowering employees for broad based action	Strengthen problem-solving workgroups, reward / recognition systems, training, skills development, communication channels. Build quality into staff. Broaden staff identities – they are facilitators, problem-solvers, communicators, customers, trainers.
6.	Generating short term wins	Augment suggestion schemes, prize-giving ceremonies, set up change corners ('C-Corners') in every department, providing updated information about the progress of change and achievements
7.	Consolidating gains and producing more change	Set up more work groups, incentivise search for improved quality. Kaizen now self-propelling, is in the culture of the organisation.
8.	Anchoring new approaches in the culture	Kaizen becomes individual-oriented, staff are thinking performers, empowered, articulate and quality-driven. No improvement is too small.