

How to Use the Japanese “Kaizen” Philosophy to Build Your Business in 2018

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We like things big—big money, big houses and big personalities. The bigger the better...except when it comes to change. However, the month of January is unique. It's the one month out of the year that we allow ourselves to think in terms of big change. In fact, we even fill it with specific resolutions to make the big changes we want in our business and our lives.

While most people are making resolutions to lose weight, get fit or save more money, advisors are typically making resolutions to bring in big assets, big relationships and big production. As pure as your intentions may be in January, statistics are not on your side. Study after study has proven that 80% of all resolutions are broken by February.

That's the bad news. The good news is in this article **I'm going to introduce you to a Japanese philosophy called Kaizen. I'll show you exactly how you can use it to make real and lasting changes in your business while minimizing the pain, stress and anxiety normally associated with change.**

This Is Your Brain

In most cases your brain is your best friend but when it comes to change, it can be your worst enemy. Deep within your brain lies a very strong mechanism that bristles at the mere thought of change and is often your greatest foe when it comes to making any kind of change in your business or life. To outsmart it, you must first understand how it operates.

There are three main components of your brain. Each came into existence at different times and evolved as we evolved. The oldest section of your brain is the brainstem, also known as the Reptilian Brain. It's roughly about 500 million years old and is the most primitive part of your brain. It controls the involuntary but vital functions we need to live such as breathing, the beating of your heart and circulation.

On top of the brainstem sits your midbrain or the Mammalian Brain. It's about 300 million years old and is present in all mammals. This part of your brain regulates body temperature and it's where your emotions live. It's also the part of your brain in charge of the **fight-or-flight response which hates change and is actually programmed to be resistant to it.**

Even though the fight-or-flight response is not as important to our survival as it once was, it remains an extremely strong mechanism. After all, it is what kept us alive for millions of years. It views any sort of



change as a threat and immediately sounds the fight-or-flight alarm at even the slightest deviation from the status quo.

This is the part of the brain you need to outsmart if you're serious about making lasting changes in any area of your life. The midbrain thrives on routine and views any departure from normal as a threat. In the past, you may have blamed your inability to change on any number of internal or external factors, but it is the midbrain and its fight-or-flight response that remains your most formidable adversary. **It interprets any change, opportunity or challenge as fear and sets off a kind of an alarm.**

It's that fight-or-flight alarm that can restrict or even shut down the third section of the brain called the cortex. The cortex wraps around all the other parts of the brain. When we picture a human brain, this is usually the section we visualize.

The cortex is approximately 100 million years old and it's the part of the brain that distinguishes us as humans. It's responsible for language, abstract thought, art, scientific thought and creativity. It is virtually impossible for the cortex to function once the midbrain has sounded its powerful fight-or-flight alarm.

It is the midbrain's fight-or-flight mechanism that makes change so difficult for humans. So how can you outsmart your own brain? It's actually easier than you may think. All you need to do is borrow the Japanese Kaizen approach to make the real changes you want to make in your life.

Kaizen

Kaizen is a Japanese word which literally means "change for better," something all advisors aspire to each year. Toyota made Kaizen famous by transforming it from just a word in the Japanese language to a whole business philosophy meaning "continuous improvement."

The Kaizen philosophy utilizes very small, often tiny changes to attain that continuous improvement and change for the better that all advisors seek. You can outsmart your midbrain's powerful fight-or-flight alarm by breaking the big changes you want into tiny baby steps.

The midbrain interprets any large changes or goals as fear. Fear immediately triggers the fight-or-flight alarm which stops any change you're trying to make dead in its tracks. **It is the Kaizen use of very small steps which may almost seem insignificant that allow it to sneak by the midbrain's fight-or-flight alarm with little to no resistance at all.** The smaller the step, the easier it is to do. With each tiny step you take, you achieve a mini-success that registers in your brain.

As you build a string of these micro-successes, your brain starts to crave more. A task you used to do for one minute you find yourself easily doing for 10 minutes and then 15 without even noticing. **This leads to new habits being built in your brain without the pain, anxiety and mental anguish normally associated with the big changes you're trying to make.**

This is Your Brain on Kaizen



Let's examine how Kaizen would work for an advisor. **Let's say you decide 2018 is the year you're finally going to build and implement a real business development system for your business.** Now there's a daunting task! So how do you use Advisor Kaizen to do it?

The trick is to avoid thinking at all about the big change you're trying to make. **Instead, begin by developing the habit of asking yourself small questions about your project every night before you go to sleep. Remember, you want something so small it won't set off your brain's fight-or-flight alarm.** This is the Kaizen way to big change.

Always think in terms of a least common denominator. Think of questions so small they almost seem insignificant. **Ask yourself what is the smallest thing you could possibly do tomorrow that would put you one micro-step closer to your goal?**

Your first task might be to just write down one thing you've done for business development in the past. If the answer is nothing, write down nothing. **Don't beat yourself up if your answer was nothing. Celebrate your first mini-success.**

The next day ask yourself the same tiny question. **What's the smallest thing you could possibly do tomorrow that would put you a single micro-step closer to your goal?**

You may decide you could write down one thing a real business development system must have. So, you write down "Drip System" and celebrate your second mini-success. Now you have two mini successes in a row.

The next day ask yourself the same question again. **What's the smallest thing you could possibly do tomorrow that puts you a micro-step closer to your goal?**

You may decide to write down something else a real business development system needs. So, you write down "pipeline." Now you're on a three-day success streak.

Continue to repeat your one small question each night. This time you decide to write down one micro-step you could take to leverage your existing book. **Nothing you've done has been difficult or stressful, but now your brain has started to register your mini-successes and will soon want more. This is the Kaizen way: tiny questions lead to tiny answers lead to big changes.**

Don't make the mistake of disregarding such tiny steps a meaningless or unimportant to the success of your big project. Instead, you are **proving yourself wise by taking micro-steps and following the path of least resistance to makes huge change in your business.**

If you were to ask yourself one of these tiny questions every evening throughout the month of January, how far along will you be? What if you continued in February with that same tiny question every night? How far would you be after two months? Remember, February is the death month for New Year's Resolutions. Yet, you'd be making the continuous improvement and the change for good that is the Kaizen way.

We have associated pain, stress and anxiety with change for so long, it's almost hard to wrap your head around a proven system where significant changes are made without feeling the pain, stress and anxiety normally associated with big change. Toyota has proven how successful this strategy can be year after year. You can easily do the same.



And, if you ever doubt the power of Kaizen and its little steps to big change, just ask yourself, who won the race, the tortoise or the hare?

For a step-by-step guide on building the systems your business needs to be successful in 2018, get our [Free 9 Systems Quick-Start Guide](#) and make this the year of Big Change in your business.

