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- **Business exists because we rely on everyone to do their part**
- **Understanding where true value is created in your organization and by whom is essential to long-term success**
- **Design, product development and sales set the vision of what the product will be, but without well trained, healthy production employees who understand and are committed to turning the vision into reality, what value have you really created?**

Getting better —Being better

PROFESSIONALISM
QUALITY
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MidIsland Cabinets takes first steps with Kaizen

Owner Guy Lussier started Mid Island Cabinets (MIC) in Parksville, BC in 1992. Starting in a small garage, they have now grown to a 30,000 square foot facility which they moved to in 2017. Guy's daughter, Kathy Hatcher now serves as Vice-President and this next generation is working hard to keep the company evolving and strong.

Kathy attended a CKCA regional event in BC early 2020 and was so impressed by what she heard and saw at Sunrise Kitchens during a plant tour and what Chris Leonard, Kaizen Institute presented with Amrita Bhogal, Sunrise Kitchens, that Kathy decided to take the first steps forward to develop a Kaizen program for MIC.

While still at the early stages knowing it's a good 2 year or more journey, by June 2020 the company was ready to begin the process.

Hearing their story gives a realistic view on how any kitchen cabinet manufacturer can embrace the process. While we've heard from experts such as Paul Akers of FastCap, it's also good to get the perspective from a company who just started their journey. Because getting started can be the most difficult part of all.

We spoke with several members on the MIC team. In addition to



Kathy, we also spoke with Michael Hunt, General Manager and Karen Petrashuk, Sales Manager. By hearing their perspectives, it's clear Kaizen can be a valuable tool in shaping the culture of your company which, in turn, shapes the future of your business.

CKCA: What were the reasons you chose to implement Kaizen (what did you hope to achieve)?

Kathy: Our main reason is that our processes were non-existent and we saw it could be a solution to help with our insurmountable problems.

CKCA: What did you hope to achieve at MIC by implementing Kaizen?

Michael: What I hope to achieve by implementing Kaizen is a clearer comprehension of the daily/weekly goals.

CKCA: What weaknesses in the organization has implementing Kaizen made more visible?

Kathy: That we were far from achieving our weekly targets. It's also helped show the confusion

that is in the company due to lack of structure as far as job descriptions, organizational charts, company goals etc.

CKCA: What has surprised you about implementing Kaizen so far?

Michael: The lack of KPI's has shown the need for the KPI's. Once the KPI's have started to be tracked, the spread sheet balances out.

CKCA: Do you have a better vision of what needs to be done this year to improve MIC?

Kathy: Yes. We need to set realistic company goals and structure, further continue implementing the Kaizen way.

CKCA: What has improved so far at MIC?

Michael: The amount of shop mistakes are decreasing. There is also a lot more open communication throughout the company, as well as the company morale has improved overall.

CKCA: Has implementing Kaizen been easy or hard, worth it or not?

Kathy: It's been hard and worth it. We continuously take baby steps towards the full implementation of Kaizen. The company is continuously making adjustments as we go through the process.

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Companies are people

Kathy: Shout out to Chris Leonard and Barry Waterman, Kaizen Institute who have been rock solid in holding our hand throughout this process.

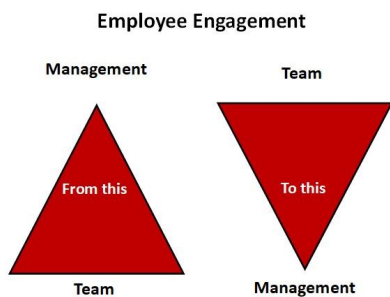
CKCA: Wat are you looking to improve this year?

Michael: Having the weekly goals met so we can be on target for the yearly goals that were created.

Employee Perspective

Getting an employee's perspective about Kaizen is equally important. Karen Petrashuk, Sales Manager told us how it was going so far from the sales perspective.

Karen: We are still learning the different tools and getting our stations setup up and tracking our KPI's (Key Performance Indicators). Because the Sales Team is already goal driven, KPI's come naturally with closing rates and monthly sales so we are a bit further along in the Kaizen process than those in the shop. Currently, there are daily Kaizen meetings and in the beginning those meetings were an hour, but now they are down to 15-20 minute because we were able to talk about the major issues at the beginning and solve more problems on the spot.



Talk Solutions

The Kaizen process is not focused on laying blame or pointing fingers, its about identifying problems and talking about solutions. MIC is already seeing improvements on the job in-

stalls, there are less deficiencies and more job completions.

Karen: Through the summer there were delays sending out jobs so they were sending out partial jobs to get something out the door, but now jobs

are going out complete. Communications overall are better, the daily meetings really help. The management team meets every day whereas they only used to do meetings twice a week. It has put us more in a proactive mode and less reactive—although we are still working on the reactive!

Ah-ha Moment

The company was planning to do Kaizen regardless of Covid and admits that June wasn't the best time to start because it's their busiest time. In reflection, they admit it might have been better to pick a slower time.

Karen: Once we have everything implemented, we'll be further ahead, but right now it's not easy to do and we know it gets harder before it gets better because Kaizen takes people off the floor and it opens up people's eyes about what problems you have. Before going through the program, it's easy to ignore issues, but Kaizen makes you bring these issues to the surface and tackle them head on. So, there are ah-ha moments but it can be overwhelming at first. Once you understand you have hit rock bottom then you know you can get better.



No Regrets

Mid Island Cabinets has no regrets. They believe the program has been fantastic and they are building team camaraderie, giving employees a sense of ownership. They have reorganized the millwork and countertop departments and the head of their millwork was so pleased it energized them to bring more ideas forward. Management supports continual improvement and the employees really feel the support.

Focus on the Process

Mid Island Cabinets is working to create a non-adversarial environment. If something doesn't work, then they try something else. There is never blame laid, its about focusing on the process only.

The Kaizen Institute is still involved and they check in, provide guidance and support. Karen admitted that if she did leave the company, she would take the principles of Kaizen to her next employer because in her mind the Kaizen approach is about people.

Currently they are still collecting data to see just how effective Kaizen has been on the company so far but Karen says "things are running more smoothly, you can feel it is".

CKCA has been working with Kaizen Institute to develop an assessment tool that helps companies identify gaps in the health of their organization which is a key first step to considering a Kaizen program.

Watch for announcements coming soon!

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