
Preface

This book is based on my experience while working with companies as an external trainer and consultant. I have helped all kinds of companies, from 12 to 10,000 employees, to successfully implement Agile frameworks. Additionally, I have trained several thousand managers and developers on topics like Scrum, Kanban, Lean, Agile, Agile management, team coaching, Lean Startup, Agile product management, and change management. Client profiles include companies in the following industries: telecommunications, banking, videogames, software factories, mobile application development, government, logistics, retail, dot-coms, online services, start-ups, and media companies.

My previous book, *Agile Management*, received very good comments and appraisals. I'm happy about that, but many of the comments mentioned that it was a good book "on how to manage *software* companies." That's probably one of the problems with relying too much on your own background, using personal stories or using some key buzzwords like *Agile*. I'd like to assure you that this book is addressed to **any human organization** that feels the need to improve and obtain better results—no matter what kind of organization, market, product, technology, vision, goal, or size.

Nearly everyone I meet knows the famous Albert Einstein quote that defines insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." It doesn't matter how much sense this quote makes; I feel that the vast majority of companies are stuck in the same process, methods, tools, practices, and behaviors, yet they expect to obtain higher productivity, bigger market shares, better quality, and shorter Time to Market.

If we want better results, we have to make change happen. We live in times of constant change, and even if we feel fine with the current state of things, we will probably find sooner rather than later that the environment, customers, competitors, technology, employees, or markets have changed and our current state of delight and complacency is no longer sustainable. As Edward Deming said, 'It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.'

But, again, it was Albert Einstein who said that problems can't be solved with the same mindset we had when we created them. In order to improve our companies, we have to improve ourselves. That's why I believe that the foundation

of improvement is not found in processes, practices, techniques, or tools (although I'll provide plenty of them in this book) but in embracing the right mindset—values and principles.

Beyond process improvement—quality, productivity, time, profits, costs, etc., I believe that there is a higher moral implication behind Kaizen. A Kaizen culture, as any culture, starts with a common purpose, a “noble cause”. As Dan Pink points out in his famous Ted Talk about motivation, when companies just focus on profit and this profit gets unmoored from a noble purpose, bad things happen.

Mass production and the Consumer Society have created a world of waste. Our economy is based on an endless loop of buy–break–discard–buy a new one. Companies plan for obsolescence and accelerated consumption. A whole bunch of companies have been created around the concept of producing crap—cheap, affordable crap that will break or be out of fashion soon so we can persuade our customers to buy more crap. Crap they did not need to begin with, but by the time they find out that the crap they bought is not making them happy, we will be throwing a new, cooler crap into the market.

The main focus of many companies, on the other hand, is cutting costs. But instead of making their companies more efficient, which is difficult, they move companies to third world countries where labor is cheap, unions are banned, and they are able to contaminate instead of investing money in filters, cleaning devices, and waste disposal or recycling processes.

The result is that we consume far more than what the Earth is able to provide, and we produce more waste than the Earth can process. The Earth's population is predicted to double over the twenty-first century. Urban areas expand and there's less land available for farming. We are contaminating the water we drink and the air we breathe. According to scientists, we are experiencing the sixth mass extinction, and there's undeniable evidence that we are causing it. Despite the effort of many to discard the proofs, there's global warming, and right now we don't know if we will be able to reverse it.

For heaven's sake—there's even a Garbage Patch in the Pacific Ocean, a gyre of marine debris made of plastics, chemical sludge, and other garbage. It is not visible from space, as plastics are suspended underwater, but the current estimates are that it is *twice the size of the United States*. And there's a similar one in the Atlantic!

We are basically destroying the future for our children, and we just hope someone will do something in the future—since ‘it's just the way things are’. A Kaizen mind wouldn't allow such behavior, and the more people embrace the Kaizen culture, the closer we will be to a really sustainable society.

As a part of the Kaizen Army, you are now enlisted to fight for a new production paradigm based on efficiency, collaboration, respect, sustainable processes, built-in quality, and waste removal. As you will see, the expected results go far beyond increased production, more profits, or faster times to market, but you should expect those also.

There is also a personal, important goal of improving and becoming the best person you can be—learning to see your faults and areas of improvement and being able to engage in this without remorse, guilt, or frustration. And of course, the need to create better, more humane companies remains. Companies that instead of just seeking profit at any cost, let us strive, shine, and explore all our potential.

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Ángel Medinilla

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