

# Frequently Asked Questions



## Improvement & Coaching Kata

### ❶ What is Kata?

Kata simply means *routine* or *way*. In the context of lean, it means new leadership routines that help value-adders improve every day outside of kaizen events ... and that help leaders teach during gemba walks and be a bridge between kaizen event team members and others who need to unlearn the old way and learn the new.

### ❷ Why is Kata important?

Chances are your competitors are doing lean things just like you and are experiencing all the same effectiveness challenges you are. Kata is a proven reliable pathway for you to elevate the overall effectiveness of your continuous improvement effort.

### ❸ At what level of leadership do we start?

Ideally you should start at the highest leadership level first as this allows you to take a natural deployment approach. Each level of leadership will learn and then create their own teaching plan for mentoring/coaching the leadership level just below them. Starting the process with the highest level of leadership mirrors the natural coaching process that will be followed when your leaders assume ownership of the process long term.

### ❹ How can we take frontline leadership, one of our most important leadership assets, out of their day-to-day responsibilities for extended teach sessions?

These techniques are best taught using an on-the-job approach. The sessions are conducted using the frontline leader's day to day responsibilities as the foundation for teaching the method. During the sessions your frontline leaders will be carrying out their normal responsibilities, but doing them in a new way.

### ❺ How does this support our ongoing lean initiative?

Our Kata program is all about strengthening your existing improvement initiative and elevating its overall effectiveness. Strengthening occurs in two ways. The first is via building the capability to sustain improvements once they are made and designed. The second way is by creating the ability to replicate improvements in other areas outside of the kaizen event setting. Far too many kaizen events are actually just another form of waste due to the inability of organizations to make the improvement stick.

### ❻ How can Kata work in a union environment?

The reason why lean is attractive to companies is because it offers a way for organizations to be more competitive in the marketplace. Increased competitiveness translates into increased job security. Some of our most successful Kata implementation clients have a union workforce. We find that when offered the opportunity, people like the chance to learn new skills.

### ❼ Is Kata just for "the manufacturing people?"

No. The opportunity for leaders to become teachers, replicate improvements quickly, sustain improvements and blur the line between when we improve and how we do our work are universal concepts. They transcend the value stream whether it is physical, service or information/knowledge-based.

### ❽ How much time does it take to build these four new leadership skills?

Our Kata program is designed around 10 non-consecutive, half-day coaching sessions that happen in the workplace in very small teams. These half-day sessions are typically dispersed over the course of a month or two so as to provide the opportunity to practice between sessions. After these initial sessions leaders will be able to practice in a meaningful way...with additional practice perfection will come.