

What Is Your “Job”? –

Larry Graham, Associate, OpEx Solutions

We all know that change is part of life. You can help make the word ‘change’ mean we are getting better. Toyota is not a proponent of plastering slogans everywhere; however, I understand there is one exception that can be seen throughout Toyota’s facilities: Job = Work + Kaizen

The more time spent solving problems, the more time that can be reinvested in adding value for the customer!

This is a simple way of saying that Toyota sees everyone’s job as having two parts:

- Work – Performing the daily activities needed to create value for the customer.
- Kaizen – Making things better to unleash greater value for the customer.

Being open to change is a great start, but it is best to take the lead. Seek and embrace good challenges. There are certainly changes that you can begin alone to improve your work life, such as doing 5S or looking for a better assembly sequence. Plus you can get the credit for your initiative and earn greater respect as a problem solver. People who find good solutions are very valuable to businesses.

What challenges await you at work or home? Don’t just accept problems without looking for good alternatives; embrace challenges in every part of your life. Remember that you don’t need to have all the answers to get started.

- First, simply recognize that something can be better. Be the person to find possibilities where most fail to even look.
- Confront the issue; note what you do know. This empowering action frees your mind to seek solutions.
- Describe the problem, and picture what a solution should look like. That’s more progress than many people make.
- Envision other possibilities and select the preferred solution(s) for home or at your job.
- Find that bridge leading from the problem to your solution. It may span the entire gap or only part way toward the end, but make a move in the right direction.
- Before going too far, or if you get stuck, share your vision with other stakeholders, and work together. At work, this could be your coworkers or manager; at home, get input from your family or friends.

Hiroyuki Hirano offers wise and helpful guidance in his popular ‘Ten Commandments of Improvement’:

Remember, you don’t always need approval to try a new idea at work, but use common sense. When experimenting, consult with your team leader, supervisor, or a representative from quality, engineering, etc. This is especially true if changes will make a difference beyond your workstation, such as:

- Changing product appearance, function, or specs
- Changing material usage or adding other costs
- Impacting someone else’s job

Colleagues may add further ideas or identify potential problems to be overcome before moving forward.

Perhaps your idea requires an investment in new equipment, or it needs time, effort, or knowledge from others with special skills. Seek information to compare benefits and costs. Schedule a brainstorming session or a Kaizen event to develop and apply improvements.

Look for other places the idea can be used too. And of course, never do anything that might compromise safety.

Let’s continue to grow as problem solvers. Together, we can create a better business and a brighter future for you, your neighbors, and your customers.

