

## Establishing *Kaizen* in small- and medium-sized German enterprises: A concept to drive innovation

Dr Volker Doberanzke

### Abstract

The ability to innovate is crucial, not just for national economies but also for all kinds of companies. *Kaizen* is the Japanese concept of management based on a philosophy of eternal change, which is to keep a continuous improvement process going. The *Kaizen* concept has been widely applied, specifically in industries that are dominated by large and multinational players, such as the automotive sector. In most European countries, small- and medium-sized enterprises play a major role, specifically in Germany. It is all the more surprising that the *Kaizen* approach has thus far been de facto irrelevant in the literature dealing with small- and medium-sized companies. This article shows that the *Kaizen* philosophy provides an appropriate strategic basis for establishing a continuous innovation process in small- and medium-sized companies. The first part of this article explains the basic characteristics of the concept of innovation and the importance of small- and medium-sized companies and their ability to innovate. The second part outlines the *Kaizen* approach and its fundamental paradigms. The third part describes how a *Kaizen*-based, continuous innovation process can be implemented in small- and medium-sized German companies.

**Keywords:** *Kaizen*; innovation; continuous improvement; medium-sized companies.

Full Text: [PDF](#)



This work is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](#).

European Journal of Economics, Law and Social Sciences ISSN 2519-1284 (print) ISSN 2510-0429 (online)

Copyright © IIPCCCL-International Institute for Private, Commercial and Competition law