

# Lean Focus



## **Breakthrough! Kaizen: Overcoming Barriers to Achieve Better Results at Mesa Labs**

By Damon Baker

On October 8-12, 2018, more than 50 Mesa Labs' employees in Lakewood, Colorado participated in a *Breakthrough! Kaizen* conducted by Lean Focus Consulting, LLC. Mesa Labs' industry-leading customer-focused, lean-based system, *The Mesa Way*, was energized by the weeklong event, designed to generate solutions to better serve its customers. Using the results-driven Lean Focus Business System (LBS), the *Breakthrough! Kaizen* smashed through barriers which typically prevent organizations from delivering better solutions to their customers.

*“Gary Owens (President and CEO of Mesa Labs) was the one who was front and center all week long with all of the employees of Mesa Labs talking about how important it was this week for them to throw away preconceived notions about what’s possible, eliminating these sacred cows, telling people ‘I want you to break through this week’, telling people ‘I want you to do it differently’, ‘I want you to take risks’, ‘I’m okay with failing’,” Damon Baker, LeanFocus CEO said. “He (Owens) really encouraged teams throughout the week in the breaking down of those barriers and he just kept mobilizing that message all week.”*

*Damon Baker, President & CEO of Lean Focus*

Transformational energy and employee enthusiasm can and do generate bottom line results.

The true tale of the tape may have been told by the Breakthrough Kaizen’s measurable data, goals that far exceeded anyone’s expectations. For example, on the first day, the Procurement Kaizen discovered a process to save eight hours of wait time on 60% of purchase orders, adding lean muscle to Mesa Labs’ Supplier OTD. Closing its gap from 65% to 82% and recapturing 2,000 hours of buyer time per year highlighted the company’s dedication to “Measuring what matters” – crucial to *The Mesa Way*.



*“Each team at the Kaizen had a very receptive team leader who received coaching very well from myself, Gary, and Brian...when we challenged them to do things that they were not thinking about, they took it in stride and they added it to the list of things they would tackle during the week...,” Baker*

*said. “Strong CEO leadership that stayed on message throughout the week, structuring the scoring to reward the right behavior, and team leadership that received coaching and feedback and were very receptive to taking on more and more throughout the week were key components of the success of this Kaizen.”*

*Damon Baker, President & CEO of Lean Focus*

Set in a more democratized environment than the “status quo” Kaizen, the Breakthrough! Kaizen set the tone for every member of the organization to engage in continuous improvement and help the business and their customers. Even the term, Breakthrough! Kaizen, emphasizes barriers that all employees must overcome to improve organizational processes.

On the second day of the event, the CM On-Time-Delivery Kaizen’s new Value Stream Mapping (VSM) improvement in OTD had a \$3.89 million impact. In addition, a daily management board was created to manage the new process.

*“During the Kaizen, we went after big customer-based things...the part of it that really exceeded our expectations was the cultural pop we got from the event. We tore down approval hierarchies, we tore down capital expenditures...this Breakthrough event really impacted that for us and really got people thinking differently,” Archbold said. “The impact of significant Kaizen cross-functional and broad organizational involvement in Kaizen as a cultural change element is really what resonated with us...We don’t want these to be all about operational elements.”*

*Brian Archbold, Senior Vice President, Continuous Improvement, Mesa Labs*

Wrapping up the *Breakthrough! Kaizen* event, The DataTrace Service Kaizen identified several improvement targets related to shipping, receiving, and unit assembly of DataTrace Data Loggers. Days in-house, lead times, floor space, humidity cycle time, travel distance, data entry times, and required TAKT time were *significantly* reduced.



The *Breakthrough! Kaizen* was a resounding success and helped refocus Mesa Labs' overarching mission and vision. Reinvigorated, *The Mesa Way* is as relevant as ever. Mesa Labs' employees benefited from key insights and solved practical problems, learning lessons they have already taken back to work and implemented. Lean Focus's *Breakthrough! Kaizen* helped Mesa Labs shatter both visible and invisible barriers to better serve its customers.

*"The energy, that cultural pop was really phenomenal," Archbold concluded. "The benefit of Kaizen in early stage transformation is to drive immediate cultural change...it helps sustain that 'change' environment, that 'change' culture."*

*Brian Archbold, Senior Vice President, Continuous Improvement, Mesa Labs*

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### BACKGROUND

Damon is the President & CEO of Lean Focus. For over 25 years, he has been implementing lean in consulting, operations, continuous improvement, and GM & VP-level leadership roles for such companies as Danaher, HNI, Eaton, Argo Consulting, Experian, and Winegard.

Trained by disciples of the Toyota Production System, he worked in a Shingo Prize winning facility and is a Shingo Prize Examiner. Over his career he has demonstrated hands-on leadership and facilitation of 500+ kaizen events for 50 major corporations in 16 different countries. Damon led the North American Danaher Business System Office. While at Danaher, one of his mentored operating companies was nominated Most Improved Plant, and one of his factories won Best Plant Worldwide 2 years in a row. Damon holds an MBA from St. Ambrose University and a Bachelors of Arts in Management and Marketing from Iowa Wesleyan University.

### INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Aerospace and Defense, Automotive, Electronics, Capital Equipment, Chemicals, Protective Packaging, Residential Construction Materials, Water Quality, Dental, Test & Measurement, Sheet Metal Fabrication, Life Sciences, Medical Devices, Discrete Assembly, Oil and Gas.

### LEAN EXPERIENCE

Building/Installing Problem Solving & Kaizen Cultures, Operational Due Diligence, Acquisition Integration, Strategic Planning & Policy Deployment, Sales Force Efficiency & Effectiveness Tools, Pricing Margin Analysis, Transactional Kaizen, EBITDA focused operational improvements, Cellular Manufacturing, 6S & Visual Management, Standardized Work, Mistake Proofing (Poka Yoke), Visual Controls, Setup Reduction (SMED), Total Productive Maintenance (TPM), Daily Management Processes, Leader Standard Work, Working Capital reduction via Kanban & Pull Based Inventory tools, DSO Reduction, and Accounts Payable processes, Value Analysis & Engineering, 3P, Accelerated Product Development Tools.

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