

Introduction to Kata

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KATA Matters

What are the Improvement Kata and Coaching Kata?

These kata were introduced by Mike Rother in his 2009 book *Toyota Kata*. Recently, both have been introduced to the Continuous Improvement and Lean communities through the 2021 2nd Edition of *The Toyota Way* by Dr. Jeffery Liker. Dr. Liker highlights scientific thinking as a key to Lean Management and credits both kata as an effective means to develop and teach scientific thinking.

Kata

Routines practiced over and over again so they become habitualized, creating a new default response. The term kata is borrowed from the field of martial arts.

Improvement Kata

Improvement Kata is a set of 4 routines: 1) Understanding the Challenge, a new level of performance you need to achieve or capability you need to develop, 2) Grasping the current condition as it relates to the Challenge, 3) Establish target conditions, 4) Plan-Do-Check-Act to overcome obstacles to achieving the target condition. Intentionally practicing these routines will create a new default mode, thinking and acting scientifically when facing the unknown and striving to achieve improvement.

Coaching Kata

The Coaching Kata is a framework, a series of 5 “categories” of questions, asked of the learner by a coach, that follows the desired scientific thought pattern. The most important question in the entire series is a reflection, the coach asking the learner “What did you learn?”. The framework is used to provoke and reinforce effective practice of the Improvement Kata.

Deliberate Practice

Practice and coaching occurs at the Gemba, the place where the work is being done, learning how to achieve new levels of performance or developing a new capability, through innovation and adaptiveness. Setting a new default mode that enables you to recognize and step beyond your threshold of knowledge.

Vision
Decades

Challenge
6 months to 3 years
Typically 1 year

Focus Process

Target Condition
2 weeks preferred

List Obstacles

Choose One



Daily

Threshold of Knowledge

Ever Changing
Current Condition

