Continuous improvement—the Japanese call it kaizen—offers some of the best insurance for both your career and the organization. Kaizen (pronounced ky’zen) is the relentless quest for a better way, for higher quality craftsmanship. Think of it as the daily pursuit of perfection.

Kaizen keeps you reaching, stretching to outdo yesterday. The continuous improvements may come bit by bit. But enough of these small, incremental gains will eventually add up to a valuable competitive advantage. Also, if every employee constantly keeps an eye out for improvements, major innovations are more likely to occur. The spirit of kaizen can trigger dramatic breakthroughs.

Without kaizen, you and your employer will gradually lose ground. Eventually, you’ll both be “out of business,” because the competition never stands still....

Nobody can afford to rest on a reputation anymore. Circumstances change too quickly. Competition gets tougher and more global all the time. What we consider “good” today is seen as “so-so” by tomorrow.