

Figure 7-1 Performance and Process Improvement Continuum

- *Kaizen* teams tend to address the physical processes that lend themselves to the use of visual analytical tools. If the team can observe what is being done to find improvement opportunities, this is a good team approach.
- Lean/Process Improvement teams tend to focus on cross-functional projects, with requirements that are not clearly understood or agreed upon between the different functional players (departments), or by the people working the process. They take a horizontal focus across the process to understand requirements and eliminate waste. Waste is anything done that does not contribute to meeting requirements.
- Six Sigma teams take a vertical approach to process analysis and go deep inside the process where the root cause of the problem is not easily understood. They are more analytical than a Lean team. Six Sigma teams use sophisticated tools to discover the “root cause” of problems, eliminate variation, stabilize processes, and sometimes even design a new process.

While some projects are definitely most appropriate for a specific approach, many lend themselves to a blend of the tools. So it is best for an organization that is using the *Six Sigma Management System* to be familiar with all three approaches because they each have their strengths and weaknesses.