

Reproduced from *Integrated Enterprise Excellence Volume 1, The Basics: Golfing Buddies Go Beyond Lean Six Sigma and the Balanced Scorecard*, Citius Publishing, 2008, Appendix A.2.

The following was reproduced from *ISixSigma "Ask the Expert"* (Breyfogle 2004). In the article a Six Sigma deployment was referenced; however, the same concepts are applicable to a Lean Six Sigma deployment. An IEE deployment addresses these issues head-on.

**Q: What can an organization establishing an Office of Six Sigma/Quality learn from the companies which have been most successful at setting up such offices? How did those companies go about it and with how many people typically?**

Successful implementations of Six Sigma simply view purpose as  $E=MC^2$ ; i.e., organization's Existence/Excellence equates to More Customers and Cash. The office title and all efforts need to be directed toward this goal.

Full deployment is often suggested as the best way to initiate Six Sigma; however, it is typically better to grow into an overall system. In the real world, most companies don't have the bandwidth to create an infrastructure that can support a very large instantaneous Six Sigma deployment.

A small but committed force of the right people given the proper authority can do wonders to get things started. Companies which are successful implement a system that builds upon the lessons learned and successes of others. Approaching initial implementation of Six Sigma through a pilot program has advantages; however, it is essential at the onset that the right people are involved, doing the right things.

Companies that have successfully implemented Six Sigma share some basic characteristics—committed leadership, use of top talent and a supporting infrastructure. This supporting infrastructure involved creating a formal project selection process, a formal project review process, dedicated resources and financial system integration.

However, the Six Sigma implementation team can encounter significant resource restrictions. Frequently, a major limitation is that only part-time resources are to be used. This can lead to the training of green belts or black belts, who will have little, if any, infrastructure support. Teaching Six Sigma and Lean tools without the suggested infrastructure will not provide a satisfactory evaluation of Six Sigma. Successful Six Sigma deployments also are a function of infrastructure. Hence, a pilot assessment not only needs one or more Six Sigma projects, but also must include

dedicated resources and a formal project review process. To assure this, top-level management should agree at the outset that the pilot program will include a Six Sigma infrastructure modeled after other successful deployments, and will include well-defined measures to judge the pilot project's success.

As part of this pilot program, a Six Sigma steering committee needs to be created to manage the overall Six Sigma process. A Six Sigma director, who is well respected change agent within the company, should be chosen. He/she needs to believe in the concept of Six Sigma and have the drive to make Six Sigma successful. The Six Sigma director needs to be a dedicated resource. Exceptions to this rule are justified only for small organizations.

The steering committee should carefully select two to ten employees who will be trained in a public black belt workshop, where each trainee is a dedicated resource for the completion of assigned projects. Regularly scheduled on-site and/or remote coaching sessions also are conducted between four separate weeks of training. A project coaching session also should include the project's champion, team members, and process owner.

The sessions could be conducted remotely but the frequency of coaching should emulate a full-scale deployment; e.g., weekly report-outs. Scheduled monthly executive presentation times should be established where the steering committee, sometimes with the aid of teams, presents the Six Sigma pilot status with quantifiable results.

Upon completion of a successful Six Sigma pilot, the scale of the deployment is simply expanded to other areas of the business, incorporating any lessons learned from the pilot session.

**Q: What magnitude of resources/dollars should be committed for the first three years of a Six Sigma initiative? Is there a rule of thumb?**

If Six Sigma costs anything, something is wrong. Six Sigma is an investment upon which organization and personal existence/excellence depends. When Six Sigma is implemented correctly, it should yield a return of at least 20 times the investment in three years.

When setting up an infrastructure, companies can easily become penny wise and pound foolish. For example, companies might insist on saving money by using black belts who are part time. With this approach, projects can fall off the black belt's plate, resulting in project completion

difficulties. Companies can achieve a much larger return on investment with dedicated resources. It is important to get the right people involved doing the right things.

In addition, organizations need to view Six Sigma as an implementation methodology that does more than just pick and complete projects. The implementation of Six Sigma must impact how people think and perform their day-to-day work. Wisely applied, Six Sigma metrics and improvement strategies can get organizations out of the firefighting mode and into the fire-prevention mode. For this to happen, organizations need to measure the right thing and then report it in a fashion that leads to the right activity.

**Q: Does a Six Sigma organization need to be run by a master black belt or a black belt to be effective?**

Making it a requirement that the leader of a Six Sigma organization be or become a master black belt or black belt can lead to the selection of the wrong person.

The leader of a Six Sigma organization needs to be familiar with the tools and methodologies of Six Sigma and Lean. He/she needs:

- To be able to look at the big picture and orchestrate activities that get the right people involved doing the right things.
- To be able to ask the right questions.
- To be able to motivate people so that projects are completed in a timely fashion.
- To understand the overall Six Sigma project execution, step-by-step roadmap and check sheets for project completion. (This understanding is necessary so that he/she can lead practitioners into doing and completing the right tasks in a timely manner.)
- To practice and demonstrate Six Sigma methodologies in his/her day-to-day activities.
- To be able to understand and convey the methodologies and benefits of Six Sigma to others.

A high mark in all the above skill-set categories is hard to find in any one individual. Real-time coaching of a Six Sigma leader who has all the right interpersonal relationship skills can be an effective compromise. With this approach, a Six Sigma coach works with the leader on the improvement of his skills so that he/she asks the right question; e.g., directing a practitioner to the correct Six Sigma or Lean application tool. This approach can be more effective than hiring or reassigning a black belt or master black belt to run the operation.

**Q: Should a new Six Sigma initiative be promoted by upper management? If so, how would you recommend it be communicated?**

Advocacy selling of Six Sigma can originate at any organizational level; however, the effectiveness of such promotion increases when originated at the executive level.

It has been said that the only reason people change is either to seek pleasure or avoid pain, where stimulus from avoiding pain is larger than seeking pleasure. GE employed both of these methods in their rollout of Six Sigma. People had to change or they would be terminated—the painful stick. In addition, a system was set up so that people who accomplished tangible results with Six Sigma were rewarded—the carrot. Similarly, in the  $E=MC^2$  model, the letter  $E$  represented Existence (i.e., the stick) and/or Excellence (i.e., the carrot).

The creation of a burning platform—a visible crisis – is an effective approach to convey the importance of instituting systematic improvements to the enterprise. The necessity of change should be presented in such a way that it is not only easy to understand, but also readily internalized.

The presentation should show that when there is an alignment of Six Sigma work with business needs and/or operational metrics both existence and bottom-line excellence can be achieved.