



The Marriage of Sigma and Lean

by Bob Dean and Bonnie Smith

You want to be lean, agile, the best in your field. To do that, you need to focus special attention on quality issues. Does that mean your lean journey will suffer?

When any organization pursues multiple improvement programs, there can be confusion in priorities and shortages in resources.

Differing methodologies can lead to the demise of all those programs.

To respond to these occasional clashes – particularly between the Global Production System and the popular Six Sigma program – the TBM Institute has been developing LeanSigma™.

In its common variety, Six Sigma has helped corporations such as General Electric and Allied Signal improve quality. The premise behind LeanSigma™ will be to incorporate the tools and measurement of Six Sigma with your company's conversion to lean manufacturing, utilizing the kaizen methodology.

LeanSigma™ will become another tool set in the Global Production System.

The need to establish LeanSigma™ came from our work with Maytag Corporation over the last year and a half. Maytag has pursued both lean manufacturing and Six Sigma as improvement programs to help Maytag grow their businesses and improve operating performance. Having realized the impact of these programs early on, TBM and Maytag have developed approaches to integrate the two and capitalize on the strengths of both programs, all under one initiative: LeanSigma™.

As our clients have discovered, the strength of lean manufacturing and the Global Production System reside in creating a working culture that constantly recognizes and eliminates wastes. The Global Production System enables an organization to significantly reduce lead time through their overall business cycle (concept to cash), putting them in a significant competitive advantage to respond to market changes.

This all happens through the kaizen methodology, where cross functional teams are guided by business improvement objectives and are tasked with developing and implementing changes that bring about results that same week.

Six Sigma's strength is in its fact-driven problem solving. This is a methodology that reduces variation, improves quality and thereby reduces cost in both products and processes.

Literally, Six Sigma means 3.4 defects out of one million opportunities. Once your product or process has reached six sigma, it has reached world-class capability. When striving for Six Sigma, the standard steps of a project are: measure, analyze, improve and control. Throughout these phases there are many tool sets that can be used, depending on the nature and complexity of the problem.

The key is to use the appropriate tools to determine the root causes of the problem, put improvements in place and ensure the process – and your lean journey – remains stable. The first course in LeanSigma™ developed by TBM Institute will focus on using some basic LeanSigma™ tools that can be applied early in the implementation of the Global Production System to help sustain your gains.

This course will debut October 16-20 in Durham, North Carolina. Updates on course development will be sent out in June. Those who wish to be included on a pre-registration waiting list should contact Nancy Bokish at 800.438.5535.

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