Lean Six Sigma Deployment Success

Part #4:

The Results of LSS Survey – The Secret of a Good LSS program

In part 3 I have explained the Lean Six Sigma background of the responders of my survey. You have seen that my questions about the core essentials of Lean Six Sigma and the most important elements of a good Lean Six Sigma program will help you both as manager and as future leader to be more effective.

Today, we will look at the responses of the Lean Six Sigma Green Belts and Black Belts concerning the critical elements of a good Lean Six Sigma business improvement program.

The Responses

Based on my question “What are the most important elements of a good business improvement program?” the responses I could categorize according to the following:

![A Good LSS Program Diagram]
Let’s look at the most important elements:

**Practicality**

The most important element is the practicality of such improvement program. About 25% of the responses indicated this. What are the aspects of a practical program?

1. It should be adapted to the situation of the company; therefore it needs to be “tailor-made”. Every company is different with their specific processes, employees and cultures therefore such program has to be sufficiently flexible and adjustable to the needs of the organization.
2. Also the training material should use examples that have something in common with the business. Examples from the automotive industry are OK for mass-production companies but it should not be used for the service companies or for low-volume producers.
3. Projects should be scoped small to minimize the risk of failure to complete. Focus is on the critical issues the company is facing.

**Lean Six Sigma**

Second most important element with 20%. Instead of using only Lean Methodology or only Six Sigma Methodology, companies should learn both during such program.

1. It also has to do with the first point, practicality. The company can face different challenges in different times. When efficiency and lead time reduction is the main issue, Lean projects should be run to solve those issues. When quality and defect reduction is the problem, Six Sigma should be used.
2. Both of the methodologies are strongly correlating with each other. Reducing complexity (Lean) reduces the chances to make mistakes, therefore improving the quality (Six Sigma). On the other hand, improving quality (Six Sigma) makes process output predictable, therefore less time required to deliver the right output (Lean).

**Tools**

This 3rd most important element (16% of responses) has relationship with the practicality and with simplicity of the program. The saying is true: “less is more”. It makes no sense to learn – therefore, burden – the organization with lots of tools and method that are not helpful at the moment. For example:

1. Why would you spend time on learning Design of Experience, full factorial designs, when simple correlation proves that you have found the most important factor to the problem?
2. Why would you spend time with Value Stream Mapping and Takt Time analyses when simple data analyses can show you the bottle neck process step?

**Results**

Lean Six Sigma program should be result driven (8% response). It sounds logical but it is not. Doing a project for the sake of learning is very costly.

1. Projects should add value to the business by solving difficult problems for the last time. Of course during the first 4 to 6 month of learning period, there is a bit of trade-off between
project execution and learning aspects but still such project should make sense and should deliver tangible results.

2. Other danger is that a program becomes tool-oriented instead of result oriented. What I mean is that the correct use of tools becomes more important than the result that you can achieve with those tools. Instead: use the tool that helps you achieve the results otherwise don’t. This point goes together with the paragraph about Tools.

3. Scoping the projects small (instead of scope like “boil the ocean” kind) will help to finish those in short period of time (typically in 4 to 6 month) with significant and proven results. This essential to enthusiast the participants and the rest of the organization for the next period with new projects and new participants.

**Business Philosophy**

Since simplicity is very much related to the tools and the practicality, I would like to discuss this final but very important element.

A good Lean Six Sigma program is not about projects: they are required to learn to use the methodology. At the end—after 2 to 4 years of consequent project execution— an organization will be much more effective in ...

1. Daily problem solving: employees will automatically apply the tools and steps of Lean Six Sigma – it becomes their “DNA”
2. Improvement-oriented: the organization will constantly look for better ways to do job
3. Empowerment: everybody will be encouraged to improve the way they work
4. Customer-focus: both external- and internal customers will be served at a higher level
5. Profit-improvements: due to company-wide improvements in efficiency and quality, the financial results will demonstrate a stable upward trend

Only running a few isolated projects in Lean Six Sigma will not help to achieve this stage. It has to become a business philosophy.

**Important remark**

The results and conclusions of this survey had a crucial impact on my own Lean Six Sigma program. That’s why I have decided to summarize my findings and describe the elements of my program in my recent book, *Profitable Empowerment*.

I would advise you, being a serious follower of these series of studies, to get a copy of my book at

http://www.profitableempowerment.com

for a comprehensive overview of the Lean Six Sigma method including several practical, real-life examples. Currently I offer you 3 free bonus materials and a unique 365 days money back guarantee.
Closing words

We have discussed the most important elements of a good improvement program based on the Pareto-analyses of the responses that I have received from Green- and Black Belts.

Most importantly, such program should be very practical, result oriented, using both Lean and Six Sigma methodologies but only the most effective tools. Ultimate aim is that it becomes the organizational DNA.

In the final part (# 5) of these series, I will explain how to fit Lean Six Sigma to your strategy.

Warm regards,

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