Do You Make These Mistakes in Lean Six Sigma?

by Jay Arthur

QIMacros®

Table of Contents

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Do you:

- Think you have to have CEO involvement to get results?
- Think Lean Six Sigma only works in manufacturing?
- Think you need expensive multi-week training to get started?
- Think training leads to results?
- Think it takes months if not years to start getting results?
- Measure success by the number of belts certified and teams started?
- Use Lean Six Sigma to justify your intuitive "solution" without adequate
- analysis?
- Start teams without a laser-focused problem to solve?
- Let teams "brainstorm" and select their own problems to solve?
- Try to fix everything simultaneously?

You are not alone!

The Wrong Way to Implement Lean Six Sigma

The current Lean Six Sigma implementation model offered by consultants encourages this type of thinking. Unfortunately for you, it's just wrong.

According to over 50 years of research, CEO involvement triggers the "Stalinist-Paradox"-sometimes it works, but half the time it fails. This is less than a 1-sigma performance.

Lean Six Sigma has been widely applied in manufacturing, but every business process, large or small, service or manufacturing, suffers from delays, defects and deviation that can be eliminated with Lean Six Sigma.

The "Magnificent Seven" tools you need to solve 99% of the problems caused by delays, defects and deviation can be learned in a day. Everything else is overkill.

Training alone cannot produce results. Only improvement projects produce results and, with proper focus, these projects can start delivering results *immediately*, often in five days or less. And projects instill skills in team members far better than training ever could.

It doesn't matter how many belts are certified or teams started. The only thing that matters at the end of the day is bottom-line, profit-enhancing, productivity-improving results. Half of all Six Sigma implementations fail. Many because they are focused on training, not results.

Too many teams implement a solution and then try to retrofit the data to "prove" their solution. Much better, more powerful improvements come from letting the data help you pinpoint what needs to be fixed and then fixing it.

This method of data mining and analysis focuses improvements on the "vital few"problems to be solved. **The 4-50 Rule:** 4% of any business is causing over 50% of the mistakes, errors, waste, rework and delay. Focus on these and results are assured.

Forming a team *before* you know what problem you are trying to solve prevents success. Teams, left to brainstorm and pick their own problems, will invariably want to fix someone else-suppliers, customers, managers, subordinates.

Trying to fix everything simultaneously invokes the *dark side* of the 4-50 Rule: 50% of your effort will only produce 4% of the results. This dilutes the power of Lean Six Sigma and leads to its cancellation. Don't let this happen to you!

A Better Way to Implement Lean Six Sigma

People often ask: "Isn't there a better way to implement Lean Six Sigma?"

Of course there is, but you have to be willing to question the current folklore about how to do it.

First, figure out what problem you are trying to solve:

- **Delays**: use Lean

- **Defects or Deviation:** use Six Sigma

With delays, just convene a team that works in the area and use the first two of the Magnificent Seven to figure out how to change the process

1. **Value Stream Mapping** to eliminate unnecessary delays between steps.

2. **Spaghetti Diagramming** to eliminate unnecessary movement of people and materials.

With defects or deviation, use data to laser focus the improvement using more of the Magnificent Seven:

3. **Control Charts** to show performance over time

4. **Pareto Charts** to identify the "vital few" defect categories to analyze

5. **Histograms** to determine your ability to meet customer requirements regarding variability.

Once you've let the data help you pinpoint where to fix the problem, then and only then convene a team of experts to analyze the root causes of the problem and determine countermeasures to prevent it. Use the remaining:

6. **Ishikawa-Fishbone Diagrams** to identify the "root causes" of defects or deviation.

7. **Matrix Diagrams** like countermeasures and action plans to map out the corrective actions.

These seven tools will solve 99% of operational problems facing any business. By eliminating delays, defects and deviation you start moving toward *flawless execution*. And customers can tell the difference between flawed and flawless execution. Research shows that these kinds of improvements will **make your business grow three times faster than your competition**.

Be a Money Belt!

- Learn how to apply the Magnificent Seven at www.lssmb.com. There are eight hours of video training with case studies and exercises.

- You will need software to help draw the Magnificent Seven. Download a free 30-day trial of the QI Macros Lean Six Sigma Software at www.qimacros.com/trial/30-day

- When you find you need more personalized help, we offer:

  a. Books: Lean Six Sigma Demystified and Lean Six Sigma for Hospitals

  b. Remote data analysis and project development

  c. Phone and webinar coaching

  d. Onsite workshops and boot camps to make your teams successful immediately.

Haven't you waited long enough to start systematically plugging the leaks in your cash flow? Isn't it time to stop relying on gut feel and take a step up to the next level of performance?

P.S. Start getting results from Lean Six Sigma immediately. Take our free Lean Six Sigma Money Belt training online at www.lssmb.com. Use our free trial of the QI Macros software to do the training exercises and start analyzing your own data.

About Jay Arthur

Jay Arthur, the KnowWare Man, teaches people how to eliminate delay, defects and deviation in one day using Excel and the Magnificent Seven Tools of Lean Six Sigma. Jay is the shortcut to results with Lean Six Sigma.

Jay is first and foremost a Money Belt; he knows how to use data to fix broken processes to save time, save money and save lives. Jay has 25 years of experience helping companies save millions of dollars.

Jay is a frequent speaker at Lean Six Sigma conferences and is the author of many popular Lean Six Sigma books published by McGraw Hill including **Lean Six Sigma Demystified** and **Lean Six Sigma for Hospitals**. He is also the developer of **QI Macros SPC Software for Excel**.