Six Sigma Black Belt

Contributed by Carl Wright

{mosgoogle right}A new job has emerged in recent years, the title of which more resembles a karate instructor than a business professional. It is called the Six Sigma Black Belt. After years of use by major corporations, six sigma is being utilized by small and mid-size corporations. This has led to the proliferation of six sigma training of many types and depths. There is training for six sigma green belts, yellow belts, black belts, and master black belts. Throw in the word lean and you have four more titles, such as Lean Six Sigma Black Belt. The karate lingo signifies the depth of training and skill. The green belt has some understanding of statistical tools and does a lot of the measurement and data collection for six sigma projects. The black belt is a mentor and coach to the green belt, utilizing their time for higher level and more complex analysis and working on the soft side such as influencing and driving change in the workplace. The Master Black Belt coaches and trains other black belts. The Master Black Belt often helps guide the organization to develop the correct human resources and provides training for Six Sigma Black Belts. The most common belt is the Six Sigma Black Belt, which has become known as the credentials necessary to lead six sigma projects. Six sigma has been utilized as a business improvement tool for over two decades. However, it was primarily utilized at very few major corporations company wide, such as Motorola and GE. As with most new business methods and approaches, six sigma has had growing pains. Some companies report huge successes, while others have abandoned the initiative entirely. There are many reasons both for the successes and failures. The reason for either almost always boils down to management. If management has little commitment and only a vague understanding of six sigma, then chances are it will fail. Another major problem is that six sigma training varies widely by training organization. Six sigma black belt training is conducted by hundreds of training companies, individual corporations, universities and colleges, and a few organizations such as ASQ and IQF. The American Society for Quality (ASQ) has developed a “body of knowledge” and certification test for black belts. Corporations training their own black belts make up their own curriculum. Training organizations often determine what they believe is the best use of a shorter training time. Colleges and Universities also vary considerably in their training. Many Six Sigma Black Belt courses are conducted over four weeks. While this may be sufficient time for an industrial engineer to grasp the tools, many students struggle to learn the material and ultimately have trouble applying six sigma. Online six sigma training courses also vary. The advantages to an online course it there is no time constraint. The material is often more detailed and presented in depth. The student can continue to review the material until it is learned. The disadvantage is the same as all online courses, which is the personal commitment to self motivation. It is best to determine the material that will be covered in the course. Any type of course format can work. Make sure it is consistent with the needs of the company and that it is presented in enough detail to learn six sigma well enough to apply in the field. Beyond obtaining certification, it is important to have a variety of reference material. There are many good books written about six sigma. Most Six Sigma Black Belts have both technical and implementation books. There are simply too many six sigma and lean manufacturing tools to remember the proper application of each from memory. Once certification is obtained, it is critical to keep in mind the reason corporations are utilizing six sigma. They are doing it for “impact”. They want business improvement, either through financial savings with cost reductions, additional output, better quality, more capacity, quicker throughput, or other metric. Six Sigma Black Belt certification can be rewarding, gratifying, and worth the effort. Investing the time to thoroughly grasp the subject will ensure it. Carl Wright is an industrial engineer, ASQ Six Sigma Black Belt, and Master Black Belt. Carl is involved with the six sigma black belt online training organization http://www.1stcourses.com