AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIX SIGMA METHODOLOGY

For many, Six Sigma is yet another unnecessary buzzword in the already overflowing lexicon of business. For many others, it's an intriguing quality management methodology that is intriguing but completely inaccessible.

In actual fact, Six Sigma, originally developed and brought into the public business consciousness by Motorola and since adopted by General Electric, Ford and Allied Signal, among others, is, in the simplest terms, a technique that brings together numerous proven business practices with the aim of adequately matching customer expectation with the delivery of a high quality product or service.

It aims to enable enterprises to cut back on business processes in order to leave only those that offer direct value, both to the customer and the business itself.

Six Sigma brings together the following business methods to create a new way of working:
- Statistical control
- Failure prevention and analysis
- Reproducibility
- Gage repeatability
- Reduce and eventually, eliminate, defective procedures and products
- Maximize customer satisfaction
- Increase productivity and yield
- Work towards endless improvement
- Maximise shareholder value
- Minimize variation where possible

What does Six Sigma aim to do?

Getting started

Implementing the Six Sigma methodology throughout an organization is not an isolated procedure. Instead, it requires the right mind-set in order to work. This mind-set should consist of:

- Flexibility and keen adaptability
- A genuine willingness to follow up, follow up and follow up again
- The ability to think outside of the box
- Fearlessness in the face of complete transformation
- Positivity
- Realism

Six Sigma's approach

There is plenty of room for adaptation among Six Sigma utilizers, however, Motorola provided the most famous template, which runs as follows:

1. Identify your product or service
2. Identify your customers and that which they value most in relation to the product or service
3. Identify the organization's requirements
4. Outline, in detail, the process for delivering the product or service
5. Edit the process for error, and eliminate defective or wasteful processes
6. Continue with step five on an ongoing basis to establish a culture of continual improvement

What about problem solving?

Six Sigma places great emphasis on the solving of problems, and successful resolution requires the rigid application of the following principles:

- Problem definition
- Problem diagnosis and prognosis
- Problem remedy
- Monitor the system that presented the problem, and seek long term preventative methods

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