



Six Sigma

How to achieve more from your lean Six Sigma deployment

Andy Liddle and Vince Grant speak with *onesixsigma.com* to explain how organisations now have a new framework for improving their Six Sigma deployments.

Catalyst Consulting recently launched an exclusive new offering to the Six Sigma community: The Catalyst Way.

Six years in the making, it is founded on the principle that any project based improvement deployment is a process in itself, and so the lean and Six Sigma tools are applicable to improving the value return on your investment into that process; in other words, by focusing on the critical inputs you will be able to achieve the desired output of your deployment.

The process begins with a deployment health check, which comes in the form

of a structured audit questionnaire. Using research data collected from over 20 companies, a diagnosis of your performance is then benchmarked and a summary of recommended improvement areas returned.

The creative force behind The Catalyst Way, Andy Liddle (formally of DuPont Teijin Films, and now Associate Director at Catalyst Consulting), and Vince Grant (Founding Director of Catalyst Consulting) spoke with *onesixsigma.com* to explain how organisations now have a new framework for improving their Six Sigma deployments, and how it has been developed.

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process is determined by the purpose of the Six Sigma deployment and in our case it was the hard financial benefits of the projects.

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A wide range of potential critical inputs were considered and eventually eight were identified; things like project selection, leadership behaviour, Black Belt capability, adequate resourcing etc. Simple measurement systems were developed for all these critical inputs.

We were now in a position to compare regions with the objective of re-energising our weakest region.

The approach enabled us very quickly to identify three things that were critical and rule out a number of other factors that were not.

The framework and supporting data made it easy for us to work with the leadership to develop and implement improvement plans.

A spin off was that it helped us to educate leadership in what they needed to do to get the most out of a deployment. Using the same structured and data driven approach, we found tracking these changes very easy and within 12 months, the flagging region had increased its performance by 300%, and within two years, it was operating at the same performance levels as the others.

The ability to benchmark a deployment is fantastically useful to anyone deploying Six Sigma and I became convinced that this approach had broader applicability. Since leaving DuPont Teijin Films in 2005 I have continued to conduct research into this area and built up a useful database across a range of companies.

What challenges did you encounter?

Andy Liddle

When I started out as a deployment champion eight years ago I was aware of many things that may or may not influence the success of a deployment. I was very keen to talk to others to identify best practice, make comparisons and find other root causes to 'problem' deployments.

But the right framework didn't exist. I would attend networking events and make my own contacts, but often the information you discover is very qualitative: you will hear presenters declare the importance of project selection, leadership commitment, using your high performers rather than 'Harry from quality', for example, but you need some way of measuring these factors, and making comparisons to make these measurements meaningful in the context of your business.

Formal benchmarking through third parties can be expensive, very time intensive and lacking in the context of Six Sigma. What was required was a Six Sigma specific framework and measurement system that would facilitate the sharing of best practice, not only internally but also from company to company.

When you are able to look outside of your organisation and share information on how other deployments are structured and working, this is where the insights are found into how effective your deployment actually is and what you can do to improve it.

It took a great deal of my time and effort but by building my network of deployment leaders and collecting data I was finally in a position to make meaningful comparisons.

So from your research, what factors did you find were critical for a successful deployment?

Andy Liddle

In my experience, there are three high-level essentials for successful deployments that are vitally important to maintain.



Andy Liddle

What inspired you to initiate the research which led to the development of The Catalyst Way?

Andy Liddle

In my previous role as Global Champion of Six Sigma, at DuPont Teijin Films, my remit covered Europe, America and Asia. The regional businesses were similar in terms of size, products, markets and technologies. In addition they were all using the same training materials, and training providers. So what was causing the variability? I became interested in understanding the root causes of this variability as this would allow us to improve the effectiveness of our deployment and increase the return on our Six Sigma investment.

Objective measurement was required and it seemed logical to use a Six Sigma approach, and apply the lean and Six Sigma tools to assess the problem. I mapped the deployment as a process itself. The output measure of the

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The core essence of the deployment

programme manager role is

programme management and support

First, 'right work' – You must ensure your projects are focused on the right issues and linked to your business objectives. You need to understand what is important to your organisation and ensure Six Sigma is being driven by your business' strategy.

Secondly, 'work right' – You need to be doing your projects effectively; using good quality people, applying proper sound project management techniques and rigorous governance through committed sponsorship, project reviews and tollgates.

Thirdly, 'create the environment' – You need to create the right environment in which Six Sigma can flourish as the natural way of working. This is all about leadership, recognition, encouraging people to do the right things effectively, ensuring the environment supports the Belts' work, and putting a control in place to avoid people sliding back into their old fire-fighting ways.

You can break these areas down into more depth and find specific critical success factors, and place measures against them. But on a high level, it's doing the right work, doing the work right, and creating the right working environment.

How can you measure your effectiveness in these three critical areas?

Andy Liddle

The trick here is to have a simple 360-degree assessment tool that allows you to benchmark your performance on a manageable number of specific criteria that relate to right work, work right, and creating the environment.

The data is presented back showing your performance relative to other organisations. Once the weaknesses have been identified it is easy to make these measurements meaningful and there is a good framework for transferring this knowledge in a safe and non-competitive way.



Vince Grant

Since leaving DuPont I have developed this concept of sharing deployment best practice further with Catalyst and their customers, and have created a foundation for other organisations to measure their performance. The result is the 'Catalyst Lean Six Sigma Deployment Health-Check', which comprises a structured questionnaire, based on eight critical inputs of your Six Sigma deployment.

Using research data already collected from more than 20 organisations' deployments, a diagnosis of performance can be benchmarked. Weaknesses can be identified and from this, a summary that recommends improvement efforts can be produced.

There is a certain element of experienced judgement required of course, but what this health check does is analyse what is causing the roadblocks to a really successful deployment by using a data driven approach, and providing metrics that can then be given some perspective through comparison to other organisations' performances in the same areas. Because of the quantifiable nature of the health check, it can also be used to conduct annual reviews as a method for measuring performance year on year, tracking progress, setting targets and assessing how effective the improvement actions implemented have been.

How does The Catalyst Way meet the advanced needs of today's deployment managers?

Vince Grant

There is obviously a need to tackle the requirement for skills and understanding of Six Sigma and lean thinking, and many product offerings have been developed over the years to address these needs. Delivering training for literally thousands of delegates over the last ten years and more, has given Catalyst extensive insight into making the learning of the tools and methodology particularly effective in their use in individual projects.

The Catalyst Way however, is now addressing a very different need: effectiveness at the programme level, rather than at an individual project level. A programme has a lifecycle in its own right, with its ups and downs, challenges and difficulties. On a day-to-day basis a Master Black Belt within an individual company will be naturally focused on imminent issues: supporting the projects, influencing the sponsors, managing the team.

Deployment managers however, with their MBBs, need to have a wider perspective to know if they are driving the programme in a good and effective, best practice way. It's about setting and realising expectations and targets: how much money should you be making from a programme? How long should it take for you to get there? What proportions of your project do you expect, in a well-run programme, to completely work successfully? What proportion of projects would you expect to over-deliver, or to fail? And of course how can we improve these outcomes?

If you sense that there has been a difficult period, you would wish to find out the root cause of the problem and take corrective action; if you believe you are getting good results, then you might want to determine the most significant drivers of that success as a prelude to striving for yet better results. Either

way you would want to apply Six Sigma thinking to the issue of the programme itself, collecting performance and causal data, analysing and diagnosing the current position, and establishing and sustaining improvement. And that's what we are providing – the wider perspective, and the opportunity to benchmark and analyse programme performance.

Through a new three day deployment master class, we have added a development opportunity for deployment programme managers and Master Black Belts to enable them to effectively review and enhance the performance of their lean Six Sigma programmes.

What additional skills do you teach in the deployment Master Class?

Vince Grant

Consider the differences between the roles and development needs of Black Belts and Master Black Belts and deployment programme managers. Good Black Belts will be determined high performers with effective project management skills, strong technical capability and effective change and people management skills. There are typically three additional elements in the Master Black Belt role: training, project support and programme support and it is often the case that MBBs' developmental needs on the programme support element are not properly addressed. The core essence of the deployment programme manager role is programme management and support. Skilled leaders who have demonstrated they can drive projects can be promoted to then manage portfolios of projects and people, and driving and supporting the programme requires a different level of skills. The master class provides MBBs and programme managers with these additional skills and will be valuable personal development for both those starting out on deployment, as well as experienced programme managers. These skills are also relevant to business unit leaders and executive sponsors.

A good programme manager or business unit leader will take the initiative, support the portfolio of projects, create the right training and working environment, change behaviour, link strategy to execution, ensure strong sponsorship and governance and have

the confidence to apply the principles and tools of Six Sigma and lean to their own environment.

Many managers have a particular knowledge of just a handful of projects, and can all too easily generalise their ideas from an inadequate experience base. The deployment master class alongside the health check, brings to bear a much wider experience from many companies involved in the benchmarking and ensures that the root cause of any lack of success in your Six Sigma programme is analysed properly, in a data driven way.

Whilst the benchmarking part of the health check is specific to Six Sigma, the skills learned and type of questions this course provokes you to answer are very transferable to any change initiative where there is a portfolio of projects. If you want to be a business leader of the future, you need more than 'Black Belt training', or 'train the trainer' skills; the individuals on this deployment master class course practise the skills that are applicable in the wider business context, but using the Six Sigma approach.

Deployment master class three day workshop style courses are regularly scheduled.

For more information or to sign up, email info@catalystconsulting.co.uk or call +44 (0)845 345 2282.



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