



Global Corporate College



Training Lean Six Sigma Green Belts

Certifying Implementation And Sustainment

For Effective Continuous Improvement

White Paper

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Introduction

Employees that are participating in Continuous Improvement programs need tools for doing the job effectively. Training is a helpful way to provide knowledge about a host of tools available to employees, how to use them, and an understanding of applying the right tools for the right function. As adult educators, you are aware that effective training can take many forms, but that ultimately the goal is translating one's new knowledge into experience. How effective would it be, for example, to train someone on the topic of "team dynamics" without demonstrating and applying the concepts as a team? For this reason, and particularly when training toward professional certifications as an outcome, applied learning skills and assessments should be strategic components of the curriculum. Also, as salespeople for adult education programs, it is a great opportunity to demonstrate ROI with project based learning. Integrating Green Belt training with an actual Lean Six Sigma project would accomplish applied learning for participants, while at the same time exhibit a potential cost savings for your client through process improvement.

Identifying the Right Solution for the Need

Training belts will not in itself establish a structured Six Sigma program for organizational effectiveness. It's important that potential trainees and sponsors understand that training for belts is not the only key for obtaining world class quality. Organizational culture and leadership also needs to support the fact that continual improvement processes are as important as the product and/or service it produces and delivers.

In discussing prospective solutions pertaining to Six Sigma training, there's a good chance you have been asked to define specific differences between Lean and Six Sigma and/or which would be the most beneficial to an organization. Rather than reviewing the history behind these two proven continuous improvement methodologies, we'll simply look at some conceptual differences between Lean and Six Sigma, define the differences of various belt colors whether it be white, yellow, green, black, etc..., as well as the growing trends to conjoin elements of each for forming a robust quality system.

In short, Lean concepts are intended to bring to light all forms of waste and inefficiencies that are of no value to processes, and utilize verified concepts for eliminating that waste. Six Sigma, on the other hand, might be described as project-based teams using data and observations as means for identifying, predicting and reducing variation to improve process stability.

Although there is some commonality or consensus on very general definitions for Lean Six Sigma belt colors, there can also be some vast differences when it comes to defining the scope of training, experience and credentialing for these belts. So let's review some definitions, standards (or lack of), and more importantly attempt to convey understandings and philosophies

behind the methodology for genuine and lasting quality improvement. A quick look at some common belt definitions:

- White Belt: Executive level or “30,000 foot view” of a Six Sigma program and its purpose.
- Yellow Belt: Associate that provides data/information to a Six Sigma project team, but not directly on the project team.
- Green Belt: Project team member collecting, compiling and analyzing data for making recommendations on variation reduction.
- Black Belt: Project team facilitator that trains, oversees team activity, and validates data around conclusions of the project team.
- Master Black Belt: Oversees the entire Six Sigma program and works at the executive level to define project charters with the strategic planning of the organization.

The greatest disparity in definition of training scope for belts seems to exist with green belt training. From the employer side of things, this is largely due to differences in continuous improvement program structures and varying approaches by organizations. Green belts most commonly make up core teams that are facilitating change, so along with variance in programs, comes the variance in roles and expectations of teams. From the professional side of it, most practicing quality professionals will more likely aspire to be black belts rather than green belts. Since black belts are responsible for training and facilitating teams (green belts), they will usually define the roles and, therefore, the training needs of the green belts.

This may make you wonder why other belt training rather than green isn't the greater priority. The simple math shows that, although opportunity and need for training exists at all levels, a far greater number of individuals with green belt level expertise will be needed for facilitating a Lean Six Sigma program. Consider as well the importance of the green belts in successful programs as they comprise the teams collecting and analyzing data, finding root cause, and implementing solutions – to scratch the surface.

Certifying Lean Six Sigma Training

There are two main elements for training Lean Six Sigma, professional and organizational development. ASQ certifications are highly recognized in today's global business and industry markets making them great résumé builders for those pursuing or advancing their career in Quality Assurance. Also, the all-encompassing content of this program can serve as a valuable resource to train functioning improvement teams with the level of detail and consistency needed for realizing quick ROI and initiating customer oriented business practices.

A quick web search will produce a massive amount of Six Sigma Green Belt training offerings for certification. These certifications, however, are only as recognizable as the institution or service provider that delivers the training. Far more alarming is the large variation in scope and content that can be found in the outlines (if one is provided) for these training programs.

Potential causes of this variation were previously discussed, but you'll find it far more important to train individuals with relevant skills for organization effectiveness than generically training "green belts".

The ASQ Certified Six Sigma Green Belt body of knowledge is very comprehensive in organizational goals, Lean principles and designing for Six Sigma, and could therefore easily be the needed standard for defining green belt training. It is also structured around the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analysis, Improve and Control) model of Six Sigma and covers practically every tool and methodology known to the Quality profession for each phase of this proven continuous improvement cycle.

Summary

By incorporating the ASQ body of knowledge in the training program and adopting the ASQ certification as an intended outcome, there are a multitude of teaching aids and published study resources available to both the trainer and trainee alike. Above all, the ASQ is the global standard for quality professional certifications and the recognition is unparalleled nationally and abroad. This by no means is intended to be a commercial for ASQ, but it is a world renowned professional society that provides much needed standardization from which programs can be modeled. With that in mind, avoid creating disparity by overlooking the importance of understanding and delivering on actual needs of your clients by overselling a program. However, and based on personal experience, I will submit that it is far easier to customize a fully comprehensive program rather than the opposite.

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