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# Six Sigma Simplified, 3rd ed - Breakthrough Improvement Made Easy

*Jay Arthur*

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**Six Sigma Simplified, 3rd ed - Breakthrough Improvement Made Easy** Jay Arthur
Six Sigma Simplified is a step-by-step guide to getting started with Six Sigma in any size company. Most existing companies are at level 3.5 sigma (1-2% error rate). Most startup companies are only at level 2 sigma (15-30%). Dramatic improvements are possible by following a simple process: Focus, Improve, Sustain, and Honor.

1. developing a Master Improvement Story that focuses on 50% or greater reduction in time, defects, and costs
2. defining the key problems to solve (less than 4% of your business creates over 50% of the waste, rework, and cost.)
3. highly focused teams of employees who analyze and determine the root causes and solutions in a day or less.
4. implementing and verifying the improvement has reduced defects, time or cost by 50% or more.
5. sustaining the improvement using flow and control charts.
6. recognizing and rewarding the improvement teams for their efforts.

Most companies find that they can make a one-sigma improvement in 12 months and a two-sigma jump in 24 months. Each jump will increase profits dramatically, because you're no longer spending money on waste and rework.

Once you get to 5-sigma, you may need to use more exotic techniques like QFD, Quality Function Deployment, and DOE, Design of Experiements to redesign your processes to deliver six sigma (3.4 defects per million) quality. For most companies, it will be several years before they reach this level of performance. Until then, you can get by with the tree diagram, line graph, pareto chart, Ishikawa diagram, and some control charts. Readers can download a free demo of these tools-the QI Macros addin macros for Excel-from .

Many companies are making the same mistakes with Six Sigma that they made with TQM in the 80's and 90's. They are measuring their progress by number of Black Belt's and Green Belt's trained and projects started. This is a mistake. The real measure of Six Sigma success is results that you can measure. In a $50 million dollar company or larger, each project should save $250,000 or more.

There's a secret to implementing any change or innovation like Six Sigma. That secret is in a book called the Diffusion of Innovations by Everett Rogers and the essence of that research is in Six Sigma Simplified. What's the secret? Start with only 4% of your employees who are early adopters of new ideas. Focus them on the 4% of the business that will yield 50% improvements. Make them successful. They will convince the next 4% and so on. Somewhere around 16% adoption of Six Sigma, the whole organization will reach a critical mass where it will adopt the change more easily than you can image. If, however, you try to train everyone, you'll risk offending the powerful laggards and late majority (the settlers). I call them the corporate immune system. If you irritate them, they can kill Six Sigma before it starts. The other benefit from this approach is that you limit your investment until Six Sigma starts to pay for itself. You'll also prevent wasting time and effort on projects ! that aren't valuable.

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