



Roles and Responsibilities

Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.

—Peter Drucker (1909-)

It takes courage to decide to do Six Sigma. It takes courage to implement it, to use the Six Sigma techniques and tools, to persevere, to make changes. You can't find that courage in a methodology; you have to encourage and promote it in the people who use Six Sigma.

The success of Six Sigma relies on the people who are responsible for implementing it. Repeat that simple statement as you read through this chapter. Six Sigma provides some powerful techniques and tools, but success depends on the people who play the primary roles and assume the central responsibilities for putting those techniques and tools to work for your organization. Dennis Sester, senior vice president of Motorola Service, has put it very succinctly: "Six Sigma is not a product you can buy. It is a commitment."

80 Six Sigma for Managers

Six Sigma necessarily upsets the status quo. After all, if you say you're doing Six Sigma, there's going to be a major interruption—or even an uproar—as job descriptions are redefined and activities are radically changed. This must happen to make any real, permanent changes. Six Sigma cannot be managed on the sidelines; it's a full-contact sport that sets new rules and aims for much higher scores! Everyone is a player, regardless of individual company positions.

However, it's important to point out here that not everyone is slated for full Six Sigma responsibilities. You have to choose well who will run your projects, participate on teams, and pursue the objective using various Six Sigma tools like metrics and other statistical measurements. You need the right mix of the right talents to refocus on Six Sigma projects.

Key Players

So who are the key players and what are their roles? Basically, there are five:

- executive leaders: to commit to Six Sigma and to promote it throughout the organization
- champions: to fight for the cause of black belts and remove barriers
- master black belt: to serve as trainer, mentor, and guide
- black belts: to work full-time on projects
- green belts: to assist black belts part-time

It's vital to understand and define key operational roles from the start. All the key players should know what's expected of them and how all of the roles work together in the Six Sigma initiative. Each of the roles has a clearly defined set of responsibilities.

Executive Leaders

The key role of executive leaders is to decide to do Six Sigma and, as we mentioned in Chapter 4, to publicly endorse it

Roles and Responsibilities 81

throughout the organization. Company leaders must kick off and reinforce the comprehensive scope of Six Sigma to engage everyone's support and participation. It's important for Six Sigma to be a company-wide initiative: that point cannot be over-emphasized. And as you begin this business-changing enterprise, visible leadership is crucial. It rallies the employees, it lends legitimacy to your projects, and it sends the clearest signal that Six Sigma and your targeted outcomes are major company priorities.

But what exactly do the responsibilities of executive leaders entail? There are a few essential aspects that help build and round out the foundation for successful executive leadership responsibility.

Determination. For starters, they need to show *determination*. They need to be resolute in believing that Six Sigma will succeed. So after the initial fanfare of introducing Six Sigma, executives should be determined to get the training, understand the savings, perpetuate the use of metrics, showcase black belt achievements, mark key milestones, and keep the overall initiative on track.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Jack Welch, the CEO who started Six Sigma at General Electric, called Six Sigma "part of the genetic code" of future leadership at that company. Welch could be considered the ideal executive leader for Six Sigma, because an executive's responsibility, ultimately, is to make sure that Six Sigma becomes part of the "genetic code" of the company. From the top down and throughout all points in the organization,

Prerequisite: Responsibility

Regardless of the designated role each participant plays in the Six Sigma initiative, they must all have full responsibility for their individual areas. Simply put, to be responsible is to be accountable, trustworthy, and dependable. It's important that all your participants recognize this as their charter: from green belt to executive, they need to exercise responsibility in all that they do to achieve optimum outcomes.



82 Six Sigma for Managers

executive leaders can inspire and promote a Six Sigma culture that continually produces results.

Confidence. Executives need to actively display confidence—not only in the Six Sigma method, but also in the people charged with making it work. By actively showing their confidence with rewards and incentives, company leaders inspire sustained commitment and effort on the part of employees. When an executive lets employees know that he or she believes in them, supports their success, and applauds their talents, employees will respond in kind. Confidence is a powerful motivator.

And bear in mind that confidence isn't all compliments and



The Compensation Link

General Electric has encouraged its executives to promote Six Sigma by linking it to compensation: 40% of the bonuses for the top 7,000 executives is tied to Six Sigma implementation. That incentive sends the message about the importance of Six Sigma and ensures commitment from the top levels down.

congratulations. It can be supported by the facts and figures that emerge from project metrics; executives can point to specific outcomes and prove that confidence in a given champion, black belt, or project team has been validated. As the old saying goes, "It ain't bragging if you can do it."

Integrity. Executives must back it all up with integrity. *They need to do what they say they're going to do.* This inspires ever-increasing confidence among project teams that an executive's word is good and that there's substance behind the statements. By following through on commitments and staying true to a stated purpose, executives demonstrate a high standard of ethical leadership. Integrity stimulates loyalty and respect, both of which are motivators for employees across the organization.

Patience. Executive leaders are responsible for practicing and modeling patience. This may seem obvious, but it's very hard to do in a business environment that demands instantaneous results and immediate answers. Six Sigma projects take time;

Progress Ahead: Drive Slowly



If a company has been functioning at a four sigma level or lower for the last decade, then surely company leaders can allow six months for projects that will bring its performance up to a six sigma level. That seems logical—but too often executives and managers are impatient for results.

Your department may be operating from month to month in terms of its profitability and everyone may be anxious for improvement, but you’ve got to ask how much of the problem you want to fix—all of it or just some of it? To fix it properly, you and your executive team need to invest the time to do it right—and that takes patience!

skipping steps or rushing the process will jeopardize the results.

Company executives have a golden opportunity to develop their relationship with employees when they demonstrate their determination, confidence, integrity, and patience. By “walking the walk” as well as “talking the talk,” they stand out from the crowd and they show that Six Sigma is far more than the latest trendy business theory. Executives send the signal that they’re actively engaged in leading and facilitating exciting changes in the organization and that they fully support the employees driving those changes.

Champions

Champions are critical to the success or failure of any Six Sigma project. The concept of “champion” dates back to the Middle Ages, to a word for field or battleground. A champion was someone who took the field to battle for a cause. In Six Sigma, a champion is an advocate who fights for the cause of black belts and to remove barriers—functional, financial, personal, or otherwise—so that black belts can do their work.

Champions are closest to the process and it’s not an exaggeration to say that they “own” it in every respect. Depending on the size of a company, champions are drawn from the ranks of the executives and managers. Champions have responsibility for the daily oversight and management of each critical element. They need to report up to senior management about

84 Six Sigma for Managers

project progress and they need to support their teams. Champions must be sure that the projects they select align with the executive strategy and can be readily understood and embraced by project teams.

Champions select black belt candidates, identify project areas, and establish clear and measurable goals for projects. They do whatever it takes to keep the projects on schedule.

They must be fully engaged in the process, allotting at least 20% to 30% of their time to ensuring that black belts are making progress on their projects and effecting lasting changes. It's the job of the champion to identify and remove obstacles so that the black belt can continue to focus on their projects and achieve the bottom-line outcomes. You can't do that from the sidelines; champions must be in the thick of the battle!

The champion acts as advocate and defender, as mentor and coach. The champion is ultimately responsible for the Six Sigma project. The black belt and project teams are on the hunt for defects and waste, but it is the champion who selects the



What Makes a Good Champion?

At a manufacturing company implementing Six Sigma, a designated champion regularly met with his black belts. At one report-out meeting, a black belt informed him that she needed to purchase and install a table for sorting defects off-line. It would cost about \$17,000, but it would provide an alternative to shutting down the entire line, which would cost far more. The controller told her to go through the normal requisition process and she'd have her table in about four months. That delay would have killed the project right then and there: to submit the project to "business as usual" would have shown little real commitment to supporting Six Sigma. So the champion asked for the data that backed up her request, analyzed it, agreed with it, and then got immediate executive sign-off on securing a table the following week.

This is the stuff of a good champion: removing barriers and sending a clear signal that he and upper management are aligned and committed to Six Sigma. The champion does whatever it takes to support the black belts.

Roles and Responsibilities 85

project and monitors its performance. Champions must thoroughly understand the strategy and discipline of Six Sigma and be able to educate others about its tools and implementation. Champions direct and mobilize the teams to make lasting change. They also ensure that the teams share what they learn; they transfer the knowledge into other areas and increase the results exponentially.

In reading this book, you are taking a very important first step as a Six Sigma champion.

Master Black Belt

This role is often fulfilled initially by a member of your implementation partner's team. The master black belt serves as your trainer, mentor, and guide. He or she teaches you the ropes, helps you select the right people, and assists in screening and selecting projects that will best achieve the hidden dollars you are after.

Once you have your Six Sigma initiative well under way, once you've established all necessary elements, designated and trained people in their roles, started projects, and garnered some results, you can graduate members of your teams to the ranks of master black belts. This ensures not only the survival of your initiative, but its sustained success. Six Sigma initiatives must be self-perpetuating; as your team members gain experience and some become master black belts, you're well on your way to sustaining Six Sigma results.

The master black belt is an expert in Six Sigma tools and tactics and a valuable resource in terms of technical and historical expertise. Teacher, mentor, and lead agent of change, the master black belt ensures that the necessary infrastructure is in place and that black belts are trained. They focus 100% of their efforts on process improvement.

A key aspect to the master black belt role is the capacity to skillfully facilitate problem-solving without actually taking over a project. In this way, you and your team members have the security of knowing that you've chosen the best project, that

86 Six Sigma for Managers

you're correctly using the tools, and that you will find the hidden streams of waste—all without losing autonomy, responsibility, or the ability to direct change.

A master black is an invaluable asset as you begin your Six Sigma initiative—coordinating and collaborating with you and upper management, advising and coaching black belts, and ultimately keeping you—the champion—focused on what's important in selecting projects and implementing Six Sigma.

Black Belts

Black belts work full-time on selected projects. As team leaders and project heads, black belts are central to Six Sigma success. They are trained to dig into the chronic and high-impact issues and fix them with Six Sigma techniques and practices. It sounds quite simple; they fix the problems, get rid of the defects, and find the money.

The black belt role is one of great responsibility and discipline and, as defined in Chapter 1, it is the backbone of Six Sigma culture. Black belts move theory into action. Following the steps introduced in Chapter 1—Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control—black belts sort out the data, separate opinion from fact, and present in quantifiable terms the vital few elements that are causing productivity and profitability problems.

Although champions are responsible for getting the bottom-line results, since they select the projects and monitor progress, black belts are responsible for doing the work. They relentlessly pursue the project objectives, they strive to understand the causes and effects of defects, and they develop the necessary steps to permanently eliminate them. They are selected to solve problems within the Six Sigma framework and they are trained to be technical leaders in using Six Sigma tools and methods to improve quality.

They are at the core, working the projects with a 100% dedication to fixing chronic costly issues. They make sure that what gets improved *stays* improved! Black belts manage risks, help

Roles and Responsibilities 87

set direction, and lead the way to quantum gains in product or service quality.

Green Belts

Green belts assist black belts in their functional area. They work on projects part-time, usually in a limited, specific area. They apply Six Sigma tools to examine and solve chronic problems on projects within their regular jobs. In this way, knowledge is being transferred and used in even narrow applications.

They also help black belts accomplish more in less time. They may help collect or analyze data, run experiments, or conduct other important tasks in a project. They are team members with enough understanding of Six Sigma to share the tools and transform company culture from the ground up. Working in a complementary fashion with the charter of executive leadership, champions, and black belts, green belts are essential “worker bees” driving bottom-line results.

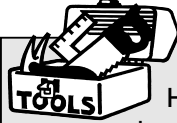
Selecting Black Belts

As we’ve discussed, black belts projects are central to Six Sigma, with important responsibilities as technical experts, team leaders, and project heads. A champion must take great care in designating black belts. So, how does a champion select employees for this role?

First of all, not every employee is a black belt candidate. It’s a full-time discipline that combines leadership ability, technical skills, some statistical knowledge, the ability to communicate clearly, and motivated curiosity. If you know the members of your staff, their skill sets, and their performance, you can accurately determine who might be a good candidate. The sidebar, “Rating a Black Belt Candidate,” provides an organized approach to evaluating your employees in terms of their black belt potential.

Black belts are the technical leaders and change agents, the key players who implement the Six Sigma principles, tech-

88 Six Sigma for Managers



Rating a Black Belt Candidate

Here's a quick way to evaluate a potential black belt. Rate the employee in each of these 11 key areas, on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = excellent, 4 = above average, 3 = average, 2 = below average, 1 = unacceptable).

- Process and product knowledge _____
- Basic statistical knowledge _____
- Knowledge about your organization _____
- Communication skills _____
- Self-starter, motivated _____
- Open-minded _____
- Eager to learn about new ideas _____
- Desire to drive change _____
- Team player _____
- Respected _____
- Results track record _____
- Total: _____

A candidate who scores at least 38 has excellent black belt potential.

niques, and tools. Successful black belts generally share the following traits:

- They work well on their own and also in groups.
- They remain calm under extreme pressure.
- They anticipate problems and act on them immediately.
- They respect their fellow workers and are respected by them.
- They inspire others.
- They are able to delegate tasks to other team members and coordinate their efforts.
- They understand and recognize the abilities and limitations of their fellow workers.
- They show a genuine concern for others, for what they need and want.
- They accept criticism well.
- They are concerned about the current processes and results and they want to improve the system.

Roles and Responsibilities 89

- They have the intelligence and interest to learn how to apply the Six Sigma tools.

Choose your black belt candidates carefully. It takes certain qualities to be a black belt; training develops these qualities, but it can't create them. You want to maximize your return on investment in every way, so it's essential to choose the right people for these roles that are central to Six Sigma.

H1 Manager's Checklist for Chapter 5

- Your primary resources are your people, particularly the ones who will play the key roles in your Six Sigma projects.
- Understand and define key operational roles from the start. All the key players should know the responsibilities of their roles and how all of the roles work together.
- Involve executive managers in leading the Six Sigma initiative and in promoting it throughout the organization. Their leadership is critical to success.
- Champions must own the process in question and be dedicated to doing whatever it takes to make it easier for the black belts to achieve results.
- Use the expertise and experience of a master black belt wherever and whenever you can. These outside, skilled practitioners can be extraordinarily valuable in helping you get your initiative under way.
- Select black belt candidates with care. Training can develop the essential qualities, but it can't create them.