



SIX SIGMA ADVANTAGE, LLC

Six Sigma Third Wave
... for Software Development

Six sigma success criteria – are you ready?

Undertaking a Six Sigma program is a major organizational commitment that must meaningfully involve top management to be successful. Committing to Six Sigma means devoting significant time and resources. Not all organizations are ready for such a commitment. The following is intended to help you think about some of the success criteria, and form your own conclusions about your readiness.

Culture factors – Six Sigma is not a solution to culture problems (though it will help to avoid them in the future) – if these are serious issues for you, the time may not be right for Six Sigma. A reasonably healthy climate is a pre-requisite to meaningful improvement in performance.

- Level of inter-unit conflict vs. cooperation
- Defensiveness
- Territoriality
- Turnover, general stability
- Promotional politics, issues of “credit”
- Fear, punishment
- Accountability, rewards, incentive systems; alignment
- Searches for the guilty

Business considerations – think through the areas where there would be payoff and check the alignment with business goals:

- Is IT/software *strategically significant* for your firm? Does it significantly impact or determine your competitive position on cost, cycle time, quality, or other factors important to your success?
- Do you need to take or maintain a leadership position in your industry?
- Is IT/software a significant cost factor in your organization, or are there other areas where gains may be greater?
- Can you stop fire-fighting long enough to plan and get it right?



SIX SIGMA ADVANTAGE, LLC

Six Sigma Third Wave
... for Software Development

- Is IT/software a “problem” for your firm, or does it run along smoothly with little trouble?
- If you have out-sourced, do you know how your supplier stacks up in Six Sigma terms? Does your supplier know?

Staffing and Budget Commitment – though each situation is somewhat different, we’ve attempted here to give you a sense of the commitment necessary if you decide to implement a Six Sigma program with us. Answering these questions will help you qualify your capacity to proceed at this time.

Are you, as a senior executive in the organization, willing to commit time to attend Six Sigma training yourself? Are your peers willing to participate as well? Your CEO or business unit top executive? Top management support is essential – significant improvements can rarely be achieved within the software/IT function absent engagement with the business customer.

Are you willing to provide “Green Belt” or “Yellow Belt” training for most of your IT/software professionals, provided you are convinced that the benefits will substantially exceed total costs, including the training? (We are confident we can convince you of the validity of the business case for Six Sigma, but we will need a few hours of your time to do so.)

Are you willing to give these professionals time to work on Six Sigma improvement projects after they are trained? Are you willing to devote your best people to this? The payoff can be very large, but an ‘up-front’ commitment is key to success.

Are you willing to devote a small cadre of dedicated “Black Belts” to assist the software/IT Green Belts as needed?

Are senior managers (‘champions’) willing to devote several hours a week to Six Sigma project reviews and problem solving?



SIX SIGMA ADVANTAGE, LLC

Six Sigma Third Wave
... for Software Development

Deployment Planning

Implementing Six Sigma means changing culture. To do so successfully, we have found that the “Prepare – Push – Pull – Sustain” deployment model is highly effective. This approach engages the organization in a deliberate and carefully planned approach that starts at the top and implements training, role definition, and measurement ‘dashboards’ with increasing detail at each level.

This approach ensures that managers at each level know what is coming, and are therefore “Prepared” to exert the appropriate “Pull” and “Sustain” influences to complement the “Push” provided by more detailed training given to the professional software/IT staff.

In organizations where Six Sigma is established or being implemented these deployment activities may have been previously initiated, and would be extended in abridged form to encompass the software/IT function.