

Successful Six Sigma Projects – Utilisation of Green Belts

(Stephen Halliday)

A key success factor to successful Six Sigma projects is the fact that Black Belts are full-time being supported by Green Belts who have their normal day-to-day job to perform as well. This model has been shown to work.

However, for many smaller companies the cost of providing a Black Belt full-time on projects may be thought to be impossible and they opt to give projects to Green Belts or part-time Black Belts. This raises the old situation of when under pressure where does an individual put their time – to their day-to-day work or their project? The answer is almost always the same; deal with the day-to-day work and if time permits work on the project.

Experience shows that when projects are run part-time there is a greater likelihood that the project never gets finished; a situation that is frustrating to both the project leader and management alike. Experience also shows, as mentioned above, that when someone is full-time on a project then the likely of success improves dramatically.

As Six Sigma reaches down to the smaller companies the dilemma is how can they afford to have someone full-time as a Black Belt. For most small companies individuals are stretched as it is, often overseeing several positions each with their own demands, so releasing someone for two to three years is impossible.

A possible solution to this dilemma is put the Green Belt on secondment for 6 – 8 weeks or until they complete the project. It is not impossible to cover a position for such a short period and it will allow the Green Belt to focus on the project without the organisation losing them for an extended period of time.

This would mean that the project must be smaller than that run by a full-time Black Belt but for many smaller companies this would be the case anyway.

In one company four projects were started by Green Belts all of whom had their normal day-to-day job as well. For one Green Belt, his project became his day-to-day work and he has shown significantly more improvement and success compared to the other three who are still struggling to balance all their demands.

The proposal is if an organisation wants to run projects via Green Belts then to make the Green Belts full-time on the project for a short period of time and then return to their day-to-day job once the project is finished. It may also be that once in this situation that small companies discover that they can release individuals without the organisation falling apart and reap the rewards from successfully completed projects.