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AMY TAN AND DR. UWE H. KAUFMANN

Forget Your Sixth Sense, Six Sigma can Take Care of Business!

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Our Lean Six Sigma Competency Model includes four major roles – business advocate, change agent, process excellence expert and integrator/enabler. Together with the relevant competencies, these roles ought to be part of every company's leadership profile. The role of business advocate, for example, is relevant to business understanding and organisational strategies, and requires competencies such as:

- Strategic awareness as well as organisational awareness.
- Business orientation.
- Strategy deployment capabilities.
- Skills to manage complexity.

HR professionals now have the opportunity to utilise skills such as change management and leadership development. Acting as a resource and/or coach for Black Belts, who encounter team-related problems, will help to build credibility. Sometimes, the HR professional is also positioned better, so as to function as a liaison with the sponsor, along with championing the cause, than the project manager.

Managing Change

One of the four key roles of HR is facilitating and managing change. Introducing Lean Six Sigma into an organisation means major changes that will have a profound effect on a broad group of stakeholders.

Managers and employees at many levels of the organisation will be asked to engage in new behaviours. HR professionals can be champions in making change happen by owning the change process, customising the change model and guiding the business through the change process. HR professionals can help businesses meet new objectives quickly by taking the following steps:

1. Identify key success factors for building capacity for change.
2. Provide the extent to which these key success factors are being managed.
3. Identify the improvement activities for each success factor.
4. See the review of the key factors as an iterative process, not an event.

Conclusion

Identifying requirements and gaps, analysing and improving processes, as well as measuring the performance long-term to sustain gains, applies to all business processes, including HR. Moreover, HR professionals with the knowledge of Lean Six Sigma tools and methodologies can deliver better service to customers, their leaders and colleagues.

Developing recruitment and retention strategies for Lean Six Sigma personnel, creating job descriptions and reward and recognition programmes, along with leadership development, are only some of the ways to become involved.

"Lean Six Sigma can provide a framework for HR to confidently present a business case for HR strategies and interventions with a compelling return-on-investment and this will help the HR professional gain respect among peers."

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