

## **Six Sigma as a Management System and the Leadership Behaviors Required to Support It**

### **An Interview with Tom McCarty, Motorola University**

by Noel Wilson, ASQ staff writer

As Director of Consulting Services with Motorola University, Tom McCarty helps Motorola's suppliers, customers, and business partners implement Six Sigma. He has observed that although most organizations can show solid successes at the project level, a collection of projects typically doesn't add up to the breakthrough performance and sustainable improvement that Six Sigma has a reputation for delivering.

"Companies that go for big project wins, looking for early justification of their investments, ultimately come up short of their overall expectations," says McCarty. "Those project returns may look good today but can't be found a year later."

What's missing from such project-oriented implementations, McCarty explains, is an infrastructure that links leadership behaviors and management systems to project selection, coaching, and oversight. At ASQ's 2005 Six Sigma Conference, McCarty will deliver a presentation outlining how to create an infrastructure capable of supporting sustained breakthrough performance. During an interview this October with the ASQ Six Sigma Forum, he identified what the essential elements of that infrastructure are.

#### **Five leadership behaviors**

As interest in deploying Six Sigma continues to increase, McCarty describes the current climate as a "hiring frenzy" for Six Sigma Master Black Belts (MBBs). Organizations are looking for the statistical leaders who can launch an implementation and teach the methodology to project teams. McCarty notes that most of these recruitment efforts occur through resume screening and conversations at the project level. In other words, MBBs are hired mainly, and often only, based on the technical requirements of a statistical leader.

"Only about one-third of an MBB's role is technical," says McCarty. "The rest is about leading, yet nobody's testing for leadership."

McCarty thus identifies five leadership behaviors that are crucial to supporting an infrastructure of breakthrough improvement:

- Passion for creating customer value
- Leading through fact-based decision making
- Driving execution
- Moving through performance metrics
- Advocacy for breakthrough improvement

When hiring Six Sigma leaders, organizations should look for evidence of these behaviors in addition to technical abilities. Existing MBBs, as well as Champions and other Six Sigma leaders, for that matter, should also consciously develop these behaviors to improve the effectiveness of their implementations.

### **A management system that drives Six Sigma**

Breakthrough Six Sigma performance can only occur when Six Sigma is aligned with an organization's overall business strategy. The more closely an individual project is tied to organizational goals, the better its chances for producing far-reaching and lasting results. The more fluidly the work of Black Belts, Green Belts, and improvement teams fits into the larger stream of daily operations, the more essential that work will appear to the rest of the organization.

Another component of a Six Sigma infrastructure is, therefore, a management system that links Six Sigma projects, measures, and people with organizational goals and priorities. McCarty specifies that a management system should integrate the following strategic business methods and approaches to guide Six Sigma project selection and reward Six Sigma staff:

- Scorecards to prioritize business objectives
- Dashboards to track operational metrics
- Performance management systems to reward Six Sigma staff in a way that is consistent with recognition for non-Six-Sigma staff

"A chronic problem is separate pay systems for Black Belts and Green Belts that don't link back to performance management systems," McCarty adds. Incorporating Six Sigma goals, in the form of both operational metrics and project metrics, into the performance management system will ensure that people are appropriately rewarded and recognized.

### **Leadership at the project level**

Beyond establishing Six Sigma priorities and goals, effective leaders follow through at the project level to ensure that those goals are fulfilled. McCarty stresses that to keep individual projects connected to organizational priorities, leaders should build project management into their Six Sigma infrastructure.

Specifically, Sponsors and Champions should take the responsibility for conducting tollgate reviews and examining deliverables at each phase of the DMAIC (define, measure, analyze, improve, control) methodology. They also have to be well-versed in project-level coaching, knowing when to offer their insights and how to pose questions that will help improvement teams move forward while remaining focused on implementation priorities. This level of leadership involvement in project management will work to reinforce the distinction to be made between an implementation that is pieced together out of a series of projects and an implementation that grows out of a carefully planned infrastructure.

**Six Sigma management for any industry**

Although launching Six Sigma with a project-oriented mentality may bring faster returns, taking the time to focus on leadership behaviors and management systems up front will improve the chances of breakthrough performance and long-term success. The extra time investment could prove to be especially worthwhile for non-manufacturing organizations that may need to adapt the methodology and tools before launching projects. As McCarty points out, it is at the project level that customization becomes necessary; the management system will work in any industry with little adaptation.

McCarty has assisted organizations in a variety of disciplines, from software developers to healthcare systems to a sheriff’s department, in developing the management systems and leadership behaviors that improve Six Sigma success. “The management system required for Six Sigma spans industries,” he comments. “No matter what industry or discipline, you still need to have a management system.”

***Conference session at a glance:***

<b>Six Sigma as a Management System and the Leadership Behaviors Required to Support It</b>	
<b><i>Who is presenting?</i></b>	Tom McCarty, Director of Consulting Services, Motorola University
<b><i>What’s in the session?</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Components of an effective Six Sigma management system.</li> <li>• Five essential Six Sigma leadership behaviors.</li> <li>• Assessment models for analyzing gaps and evaluating and selecting Six Sigma leaders.</li> </ul>
About ASQ’s 2005 Six Sigma Conference: <a href="http://www.asq.org/ed/conferences/sixsigma/2005/">http://www.asq.org/ed/conferences/sixsigma/2005/</a>	