This week's discussion is designed to better enable you to understand process improvement strategies and apply these to real-world situations. Please respond to the following prompt.  Remember that your initial discussion forum post is due by Day 4 of this module, and your responses to at least two of your classmates' posts are due by 11:59 PM on Day 7 of this module.

* Share the process improvement strategies used in your organization and how they are helpful to your organization.
* If you don’t have a process improvement program, suggest strategies that will improve your organization.
  + Briefly describe this method/strategy and how it might be applied.
* Develop and share a new strategy and describe how you might get your management's commitment and approval to implement it.

The process improvement strategy employed at my organization is ACE, which is similar to six sigma. ACE stands for achieving competitive excellence, and was a process improvement system developed at UTC in 1998. It aims to integrate the best practices of lean and sis sigma with principals such as statistical process control, TPS, value stream mapping, kaizen, etc. ACE is a large operating system, thus I will only go into detail of a few of the components of ACE to give a taste of what ACE is, since summarizing each component of ACE would take a very long time.

One important component of ACE is statistical process control, which is a method developed by Shewhart in 1924. Statistical process control exists to monitor or regulate processes to guarantee the highest possible capability using statistics. It is based off the principal that if the process remains the same, the outcome will remain the same. Having a production process in a state of statistical control and keeping it in statistical control is imperative to having the ability to predict future output from the production process.

Another key component of ACE for process failure investigations is relentless root cause analysis. This is an approach to dig deeply into a problem which otherwise may only obtain fleeting attention. The reason for relentlessly pursuing the real cause is that the root cause may be too far to be originally noticed. Curing symptoms of a problem are much more costly than eliminating the root cause, thus detailed investigations into problems can pay large dividends down the line (especially in the aerospace industry, which is the industry I work in).

Another component of ACE which is shared with six sigma is lean manufacturing processes. The lean manufacturing process is a method for creating a more effective business by eliminating wasteful practices and improving efficiency. Lean focuses on improving products and services based on what customers want and value. By reducing waste and improving satisfaction with customers, the lean process is designed to save companies money and increase profitability.

One process that I may add to the existing ACE suite of components is a component focused on employee support of other employees. Oftentimes employees are placed on projects which do not perfectly overlap their skill set. But often this skill set is shared by another employee who can assist when the project domain falls outside of the first employee’s skillset. While this knowledge can be transferred on a small scale, oftentimes time charging can cause a significant barrier to getting more than perimeter support. Some way to more easily share knowledge between employees in this case may be beneficial. Presenting an action plan and arguing for increase efficiency and synergy may be a good way to convince management to implement the new knowledge transfer component.