Title:
Company Politics And Six Sigma

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Summary:
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Political factors that can affect a Six Sigma project include personal resistance to change, inflexible company policies, and incompatibility with existing organizational methods and goals. Not surprisingly, all of these factors also affect business processes of any kind. They are not unique to Six Sigma. This is one of Six Sigma's strengths: realistically acknowledging the way politics work in an organization. Six Sigma is not just number crunching. It understands the importance of and encourages the involvement of people throughout and at all levels of the organization working together toward a common goal. Six Sigma encourages planning, communication, and openness about processes, procedures, and information.

Many people see change, any change, as loss—a loss of their power or a loss of the security of the old way of doing things. Thus, people are prone to defend the old way, out of habit and out of unease. They wonder how change will affect

them and what exactly happens behind the scenes and if they don't know, become apprehensive. This is a problem that can be overcome through communication. Six Sigma successes require clear and open communication at all levels. Any change in an organization will meet some resistance, either intentional or just from inertia. When management can effectively communicate that it is behind that change and can communicate the positive aspects of the change, resistance and "turf" politics can be countered and overcome.

Another problem is people who disregard the value and power of Six Sigma and consequently, they are reluctant to support Six Sigma projects. To the uninitiated, Six Sigma may appear similar to or simply an evolution of other quality programs. There have been so many quality improvement fads over the years. It is not surprising that people are now a little jaded. Others may see Six Sigma as solely another cost-cutting or productivity enhancement fad. This is a short-sighted view. Six Sigma is neither a fad nor just another quality initiative. It is a "way of life." It is a multi-level, cyclical movement toward continual process improvement. The quality improvement fads sell themselves as cheap and easy quick fixes. The reality is that there are no quick fixes to significant process improvement. Six Sigma understands that; it is not a simple quick process. However, the right Six Sigma training and information will help people to understand that Six Sigma is significantly different; it is a robust continuous improvement strategy and process.

Once projects are begun, Six Sigma projects can become a battle of wills for control over which strategy, approach, or tool is used. Team meetings can devolve into arguments over which measurement to use, how it will be calculated, which charts will be generated, whether to use DMAIC or DMADV, etc. Six Sigma is not about making things more difficult. It is about using common sense to make things easier. It is certainly about recognizing that there is more than one road to improvement and more than one right answer to a problem.

In overcoming political problems, the leadership of senior management is critical. Successful Six Sigma programs are built on a solid organizational foundation. The organizational structure and system needs to be clearly identified and communicated to the entire organization to successfully implement Six Sigma Quality. Becoming a Six Sigma organization doesn't just happen. Planning and training goes into setting up a successful Six Sigma organization. Employee roles and responsibilities must be established and clearly communicated to all. For many companies successful in Six Sigma, the key factor has been the direct involvement of their top leaders.

Six Sigma is about getting everyone involved. A Six Sigma project forms a team of people who work together to identify problems and develop solutions. Such

teams are not isolated teams rearranging the world for everyone else to live in. These teams are serving the organization by employing the skills and tools they have learned to increase quality and reduce defects. Instilling the team concept along with expert training will go a long way toward solving potential political troubles in your organization.