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Six Sigma & Lean

New Product Development

Project Management

Employee Development

In-sourcing/Outsourcing

Six Sigma, Lean, And Jennifer Lopez

Have you ever wondered what Six Sigma and Lean are? Have you ever had difficulty explaining these concepts to someone? Maybe this fictitious conversation will help.

Our eyes met across the room. As we moved closer, I scrambled for something brilliant to say. Luckily, she started the conversation.

“Hi,” she said. “My name is Jennifer Lopez. My friends call me J. Lo.”

I responded by telling her my name, although I had no nickname. I told her that in my line of work there aren’t any guys running around calling themselves “Snoop” or “Diddy.”

“Oh, and what line of work are you in?” she asked.

“I’m a practitioner of Six Sigma and Lean. In fact, I’m a Black Belt.”

Sometimes the “Black Belt” title gets her attention, but normally, she turns and walks away... and I wake up from my dream. Such is the life of a Six Sigma and Lean practitioner.

While Six Sigma and Lean are more popular today than ever, there are still millions of people who don’t have a clue. People often give me a “deer in the headlights” look or they associate Six Sigma with being in a cult and Lean with being on a diet. It’s easier to avoid the terminology and dive straight into an opening that is both catchy and true.

“I saved \$1 million per year at a \$10 million company.”

“I helped change the corporate culture so people all look at the business the same way, all speak a common language of continuous improvement, and all have a sense of urgency to make the business the best it can be.”

“I streamlined the process so we can afford to do it in the U.S. and don’t have to ship the equipment (and my desk) to China.”

Here are six things you should know about Six Sigma and Lean:



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1. Six Sigma combines project management, statistical, quality, and financial concepts to drive variation out of processes.
2. A project typically follows the Define – Measure – Analyze – Improve – Control path. This is commonly referred to as DMAIC.
3. Lean utilizes tools such as 5S, value stream mapping, mistake-proofing, and quick changeovers to reduce waste in processes.
4. Six Sigma and Lean don't just work for manufacturing processes – they work for any processes.
5. You can do Six Sigma alone, Lean alone, or combine the two. While there are some preferred ways to do things, the key is to get started and start making improvement a cornerstone of your corporate culture. Remember, even a much revered lean organization like Toyota didn't make it happen over night and they haven't stopped improving.
6. Six Sigma and Lean aren't confined to the borders of the United States. People around the world are using them, so if you already face competition from overseas, it has the potential to get even uglier if you don't start improving now.

I only hope that more people become aware of Six Sigma and Lean and join me as practitioners.

And on that day, my dream will come true.