

Change Management and 6 Sigma

The case for closer integration

Where to start our analysis? Let's begin with some consideration of what 6 Sigma is about. It's about getting cost saving through efficiencies – whether it's through customer satisfaction, business standardisation or getting the metrics and measurement right – it's about chasing the big cost savings benchmarks. For example GE saved \$2 billion in 1999 and \$3billion two years later from some 6,000 6 Sigma projects.

However, we're not all GE. Many organisations have far less financial success and buy-in within their organisations. In fact, at a time when we most need those cost reductions there is a value gap being created in 6 Sigma projects as evidenced by:

1. No time or patience to wait to see the end results – if organisations can't see early success indicators then we very often see disbanding of 6 Sigma teams and moving projects into the business to save cost
2. A recognition that business models are under threat and that there is a need to be nimble and keep adjusting to stay in the game. However, continually announcing initiatives with no real execution can cost leaders their credibility
3. A need for people's engagement for changes to have traction. A legacy of half executed and sunk costs projects alienate people and actually cost money in terms of lost productivity

If there was ever a case for change management within 6 Sigmaread on.

Question: What early measures could we take - before process and financial benefits - to know that we're on track for end results? What are the short term signals that things are working?

We can measure behaviour; levels of resistance, engagement, acceptance, commitment. And if we can measure it, we can manage it - analyse risk, enablers and take mid course actions as part of a plan.

Putting those two things in the same sentence – *people* and *measures* via a people centred approach to implementation (PCI[®]) - we can begin to measure the extent to which we're getting the commitment and behaviour change from the people that we need to get results from.

Question: What do we need from leaders to guarantee 6 Sigma success?

If 6 Sigma is about rooting out reactivity and re-aligning the culture to be more efficient, then as custodians of the culture we really need to focus on measuring and driving leader behaviour.

This leader behaviour is as relevant to executives as it is to local managers. This is because of the consistency needed between "say" and "do", for already overwhelmed people to start taking the business of major change seriously – ([see "Leading Change in disruptive times; 4 lessons you can put into practice"](#)).

Question: How do we ramp up engagement for 6 Sigma success?

Start with the “philly Sandwich”- or middle managers - who are the meat in the middle. The connection between the leadership (the change) and the people who have to drive execution, very often when they are uncertain about their own futures. Start with involvement people value. What they get to choose, and create more than what they are given.

Involvement is a tricky issue of course, but there’s a reason why there’s a “ready-steady” before “go” – involvement can be quicker than just telling people.

During 6 Sigma training there’s going to be some discussion on success factors – the differentiators between success and failure. PCI is a people centred methodology for change with 6 [critical success factors](#) for major change.

The three we’ve isolated in [Changefirst’s November newsletter](#) are as follows:

1. Measuring a Strong Personal Connection (CSF 5) to see if commitment and behaviour changing actions are having an impact
2. Developing Effective Change Leadership (CSF 2) bringing real credibility, direction and guidance to the change effort
3. Building Committed Local Sponsorship (CSF 4) through the understanding and commitment for middle and front line managers

You can find more information on these and PCI [here](#).

This paper is one of a series on a number of change related topics all of which are available from the [Knowledge Centre](#) on the Changefirst [website](#).

You can also follow our progress in the following ways:

