

Changing with Lean Six Sigma

A. Aruleswaran

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Numerous books have been written about Six Sigma, a production methodology that typically results in quality improvement. Lean Six Sigma, an increasingly popular variation of Six Sigma that focuses on eliminating complexities and waste, has also received considerable attention.

Instead of following the typical formula of outlining methods of implementing this system, A. Aruleswaran's book, *Changing with Lean Six Sigma*, addresses a critical issue that shouldn't be overlooked: the change required in an organization to make Lean Six Sigma happen.

The author begins with a simple overview of Lean Six Sigma and an explanation of the "DMAIC" methodology: Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control. This provides the necessary foundation for a discussion of organizational change. Aruleswaran outlines four important "change factors" that provide the basis for success: Leadership engagement, quick starts and hits, organizing for success, and value creation.

The second section of the book focuses more specifically on the elements needed to effect change. The author presents a framework for change that includes a basic philosophy. He then details "eight guiding principles" for the effective implementation of Lean Six Sigma.

But as Aruleswaran points out, "the most significant challenge is to change people and their mindsets." The author therefore discusses the fundamental difference between motivating the industrial worker of the past ("carrot-and-stick") and the knowledge worker of the present ("trim tab"). Aruleswaran quotes Buckminster Fuller, who likened the trim tab (a miniature rudder at the edge of a ship's main rudder) to a "little individual" who can have a big impact on an organization. The author uses the trim tab analogy to conclude, "Each Knowledge Worker is empowered to effect, enable, and sustain significant change regardless of his or her position in the organization."

In the final section of the book, Aruleswaran offers a case study of a manufacturer that used Lean Six Sigma to solve a productivity problem, as well as a case study of sustaining change in a financial services organization. These examples provide valuable real-world context to help managers apply the book's lessons to their own situations.

Changing with Lean Six Sigma does not replace the need for a comprehensive implementation guidebook; rather, it is supplementary information that emphasizes the importance of change management in making the transition to Lean Six Sigma. While it is highly focused on change, Aruleswaran's book will help business managers recognize the organizational challenges associated with implementing Lean Six Sigma and, as a result, minimize the risk.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (May 18, 2010)

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