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### **Lean Six Sigma – Innovative Safety Management**

**Lean Six Sigma successfully has been used by a number of multinational organizations to not only improve operations, but to achieve outstanding safety outcomes as well.**



Six Sigma is a widely used, data-driven, quality improvement process. Manufacturing uses a discipline called “Lean” (lean manufacturing) that focuses on process speed and efficiency. This process has assisted a number of innovative organizations in garnering tremendous efficiencies in their operations as well as becoming more nimble in product and process innovations.

### **Lean Six Sigma Framework**

Lean Six Sigma is a combination of the best of these two processes. It combines the use of data to drive improvement as well as streamline internal processes and procedures to maximize efficiency. It is attuned to the need to provide high-quality, rapid delivery at minimal cost.

The foundation on which the Lean Six Sigma concept rests consists of facts, data and information. The three key elements of Lean Six Sigma are:

- Customer focus
- Internal processes and
- The organization’s staff

Each element is supported by two pillars. The customer focus element counts speed and quality as its pillars; the internal processes element relies on flow and variation control; and the people element requires teamwork as well as innovations and learning. This results in a 360-degree integration and alignment of an organization’s systems and resources.

Companies need the creativity of employees, working on the internal processes with data and understanding, to create solutions that will delight customers by not only meeting, but exceeding, their expectations.

### **Safety Evolution**

Safety traditionally is reactive in its posture, driven by loss statistics and focused on the worker to garner improvement. Back in the 1920s, Heinrich did a study that placed 88 percent of the reasons for accidents on the unsafe actions of workers. This eventually placed the focus of safety interventions on the worker.

Traditional safety utilizes programs, work rules, training, meetings, committees, signage, behavior

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modification, consequence management, coaching and, ultimately, punishment to manage the worker into safe practices and actions. This addresses a limited part of the whole.

The employee is a part of the greater organizational system. It takes the worker, equipment, processes, procedures, planning (both tactical and strategic), supervision and management, leadership, vision and values to produce the product or service.

This then feeds into a larger system of customers, competition, communication, finance and banking, to name a few other entities which impact and are impacted by worker safety. All these in some way exert some degree of influence on the decisions the workers make every day in performing their tasks. Some of these decisions, if made without an understanding or appreciation for the complex systems at work, may lead to incidents and possible injury and losses.

### **Lean Six Sigma and Safety**

Applying Lean Six Sigma thinking to safety has tremendous possibility and potential. Lean Six Sigma provides a framework for integrating safety into operations.

In Lean Six Sigma operations, safety is addressed in tactical as well as strategic planning. The organizational systems that drive efficiency and quality are applied to the safety process. Safety goals are aligned with business

objectives, thereby creating a linkage between resource needs and allocation.

Lean Six Sigma addresses the needs of all the organizational stakeholders and creates a holistic and integrated approach to managing safety. The result is that the process creates innovative solutions that not only meet – but exceed – the organizational and business expectations.

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