

Please Explain Six Sigma

Please Define Six Sigma! Six Sigma is a quality improvement methodology. Six Sigma is also a "brand name", used by thousands of consultants, but the trademark is owned by Motorola. That is why you see it capitalized when it is used by Motorola and in lower-case letters otherwise.

Why is it called six sigma? Because sigma is a long-standing symbol used by engineers, mathematicians, and statisticians as a unit to measure statistical variation. Sigma is Greek for the letter 'S'. Why 'six'? It refers to the amount of deviation from the common bell curve used to measure change. Six sigma represents "almost perfect", or 3.4 defects per million.

So, if you count those bars to the right, you get six sigma. What that represents is the deviation from perfect. Obviously, if you are making plastic parts, you would be very happy indeed if you could have only 3.4 defective parts per million! That is what this is all about. It is a method that enables you to measure your processes in order to improve your bottom line.

One reason it is difficult to give an overview of six sigma is because it means different things to different people and different industries. It was originally developed by Motorola as a way to improve manufacturing, but it soon grew to include management and service industries, such as banking.

Can six sigma help in injection molding? Here are some benefits reported by several injection molders:

Improvements related to in-process inspection effectiveness Increased weigh-count throughput Cycle time and scrap reduction Help reduce process variation and costs This is not only something that benefits large corporations, it can be tailored to suit small and medium sized companies as well. A good example of this is GW Plastics, in Bethel, Vermont.

Six Sigma is a top-down program It is common knowledge that a program such as this will only work if there is an absolute commitment from top management. It is a complicated, time consuming and somewhat expensive program to become involved with. The rewards can be huge though, and the company bottom line will show it.

There are many, many companies offering six sigma services. There is even one called Motorola University, the same people who developed this in the first place! You can earn your "green belt" or "black belt" and become a trainer by taking online courses as well. This is certainly the most popular quality improvement program in history. It is not a "flash in the pan", though some companies fail to follow through and realize the benefits. It really encompasses the best of the quality programs that have preceded it and can help your company in many ways.

Learn more at:www.global-plastic-injection-molding.com

About the Author

Master moldmaker and engineer for over 30 years in the plastic injection molding industry. My viewpoint is rather unique because of one foot in management and the other on the shop floor. I've seen many programs over the years and know what happens in the real world.www.global-plastic-injection-molding.com

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