

Six Sigma Green Belts

Six Sigma Green Belts – The Lynchpins of DMAIC projects Six Sigma DMAIC project teams are formed to investigate and resolve business issues or problems, where either the cause of the problem or the solution to that problem is not immediately apparent.

There are many factors that will determine the success of a particular project with committed leadership, having quantifiable measures and results, the availability of full time Black Belts and integration of the project deliverables with the companies strategies some of the main ones. However, as a Black Belt running DMAIC projects, it's the selection of the right team members and subsequent training of them as Green Belts that has been the single biggest contributor to the success of the project. It's critical that Green Belts, as Black Belt Project team members, are chosen on the basis that they can bring something to the team; they can actively contribute and have the knowledge and expertise to help the team resolve problems and issues. The key criteria for selection of Green Belts are:

1. Process Knowledge and Expertise – Select individuals with the relevant knowledge, expertise and experience that relates directly to the problem under investigation. They should preferably be the "Doers" within the process, the people who conduct the activities within the process on a day-to-day basis. I view this as the primary role of the Green Belts, taking the data about the "As-Is" process to develop the "To Be" process. Specific selection of a project team member who has in depth understanding of the data surrounding the process, adds significant value to the MEASURE phase by speeding up what can sometimes be a slow process of data collection and interpretation. They do this on behalf of the Black Belt and take on this specific role for the team, summarising and drawing conclusions about the data for review with the Black Belt prior to the MEASURE gateway review.
2. Positive "Can-Do" Attitude – Project teams thrive through the productive exploitation of the different personalities, skills and behaviours of the individuals within that team. However, one thing that all Green Belts should have in common and all bring to the team is a positive attitude towards improving the process. The primary attribute of the Green Belt is as a "Change Agent", someone who is influential within their peer groups and who is a real advocate for change. Having team members who are positive about the change helps to spread the message across the organisation, this is because, in general, they have the respect of their peer group. If members of your project team have a positive experience of working on a successful project, it will make it easier for the Black Belt to enlist the help of different people across the organisation on future projects. Success on projects can be very infectious and generating a pool of good quality, potential project team members who are joining new teams, already having this positive "can do" attitude, allows an organisation to have numerous projects running at the same time.
3. Formally trained as a Green Belt – Having project team members who are trained on both the philosophies of Six Sigma, and on some of the key tools and techniques they are likely to use during the 5 DMAIC phases of the project, is a significant factor in ensuring the delivery of projects on time, on budget and within the benefits target set at the start of the project. If the Six Sigma Green Belt training course is structured and delivered effectively, it will involve a high level of participation from the attendees through workshops and activity sessions, which allow them to practice the tools and techniques in a safe environment. This then means that when these tools are introduced throughout the 5 DMAIC phases, everyone on the team already has experience of the tools and can use them immediately. The Black Belt can deliver the requirements of the project plan without having to spend time training his / her team members, during project team meetings, on how to use the separate tools. This immediate application of tools within a real life project not only delivers quicker results, but is extremely effective in embedding the knowledge from the training course. A key point to stress is that when "pulling a team together, members are "selected" rather than being volunteers, this is done to ensure that the right people, with the right skills, knowledge and attitude, are utilised effectively to solve the problem that instigated the project. The Black Belt on the project has the job of selecting and forming the right team but it is the project sponsor who now has a very important role to play in securing the resource for the project, ensuring that project members have the support behind them from their Managers and colleagues, to fulfil the day-to-day role requirements in the workplace while the Green Belt is involved in project work. For further information contact the author of this article, Paul Martin, via Aster Training