

Human to human approach – six (sigma) steps to success for the 2020 vision

Abstract

A human to human approach is needed for leadership development while a six sigma approach is relevant for the manufacturing industry. We can learn how manufacturing is eliminating errors effectively while it will not work for humans. The six sigma process can help for decision making process. Leaders need to have a human touch in order to get to the next level. A six steps approach with efficient recruitment, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, (extrinsic & intrinsic motivators) mentor programs, coaching, and leadership development is needed for the 2020 vision.

1. Introduction

When looking into our very near future of 2020 – the perfect vision - in multinational organizations we tend to focus and relying on huge networking systems with complex and multilayered workflows, total quality management, matrix structures or even robotic processes; in the manufacturing world this seems to be the accurate way to measure and assess processes in order to be successful and competitive with the rest of the world; manufacturing and assembling multiple cars in today's world would not be possible without the support of computers and robotic technology. Hence this process is about maximizing time as well as perfection without any errors or defect. We typically apply the six sigma methodology with its implementation of a measurement-based strategy that focuses on process

improvement and variation reduction used by GE (General Electrics) - DMAIC – define, measure, analyze, improve, control – is the acronym to be applied for every process.

For a standardized process, as an example, planning and forecasting airline check-in six sigma will be functional. Each check-in resource has a very specific role defined so that they do not deviate. Initially, it is about planning into the minutest details so the process will work perfectly. We *define* how many employees work on the morning shift on any given day, we *measure* how many passengers might arrive in the check-in area in the airport prior to the flight's departure; we can *analyze* and compare data information from previous months or years at the same time of the day. If more resources are needed in order to be more efficient to *improve* customer satisfaction, punctuality and increase efficiency, we have total *control* over the whole process. There could be some other influences like increment weather conditions or wild birds on the tarmac but that is beyond our control; though, when in the airline business outer influences should be potentially factored in.

On one hand, the six sigma approach works well for workflow, processes, structure, improvements and reduction of errors. On the other hand, if we look at a global organization we input data of our resources, we compile more data, we transfer data, we produce sophisticated excel spreadsheets for budget as well as bonus planning. It makes sense to outsource some of the data that can be automated. In many industries outsourcing has been key to be more cost effective, structured, and time efficient. However, being an organizational development and organizational culture consultancy we ask the question: where is the human touch and the individual in this picture? Again, all the systems are good and well to gather, mine and output data when we need to initiate and process salaries and benefits. The systems are important for output that needs to be standardized and repetitive. We as humans have oversights, nonetheless a great system can

capture all the correct data and transform the data. However, the initial data needs to be accurate at all times otherwise we have major bugs in the process that cost the company huge losses.

To take the organizational structure and matrix approach to the next level, it comes to the human approach. It is the human touch where a systems approach is certainly not the best method. We talk about developing our talents and developing our high potentials. How do we get there with a savvy but efficient and respectful methodology?

We have developed a six step approach that assists a global player to become more efficient and competitive in the global market. The approach should be easy to follow but efficient, time and cost effective as well.

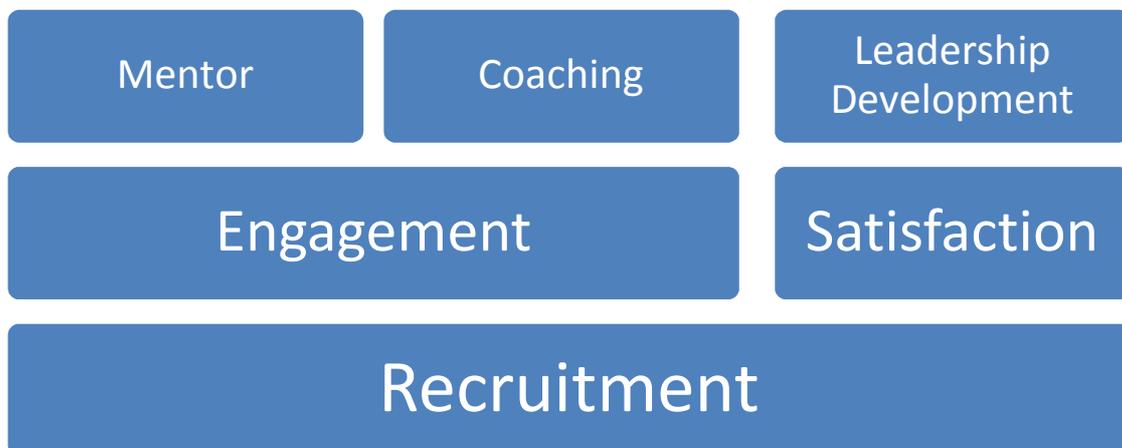


Figure 1: Six step approach (source: Kronbuegel/Mueller 2014).

2. Six (sigma) steps to success for the 2020 vision

1. Recruitment
2. Employee engagement

3. Employee satisfaction
4. Mentor program
5. Executive coaching
6. Leadership development

3. Recruitment for a global organization

Recruitment is the initial building block and basis for success in a multinational organization of today's world. Employees should be our assets and not our liabilities. Recruiters have to be well trained in HR processes but also need to understand the business clearly. If we have recruiters who only read from the job description while not talking the business language we miss the boat. While having a well written job description understanding the human element is key. In certain industries, headhunting, reading and weaving through many hundreds of resume is being outsourced. There are developers in emergent countries who are creating a computer program to go through resumes faster. You obviously need to have the correct keywords in order to be considered for a position. If we think with a six sigma approach it seems as if resumes from human beings will be laundered in dry cleaning machines and come out clean and cleared to the head-hunters desk for next steps in the recruitment process. What is missing is the transferrable skills like longevity, loyalty, values, and executive presence? How can those skills be detected by a machine? This might not be the recommended way to look for high potentials or leaders in the industry. As Jim Collins recommend in his book "*Good to Great*" (2001)

- Have the right people on the bus
- Have the wrong people off the bus
- Have the right people in the right seats.

Especially, in tumultuous times like now we need to make sure that we spend ample time for the recruitment approach. Recruitment is sometimes overlooked in the process – a big mistake that can be costly.

Once you have recruited the right people to move forward in your organization you want to make sure that you focus on a robust on-boarding process. A first day check in is nice to have but what is more important, crucial and relevant is a 30, 60, 90 day check in. Again, when thinking back to the six sigma approach with DMAIC - define, measure, analyze, improve, control we can eliminate many errors. We define the best resource we want to look for the right position in the organization; we *measure, analyze*, benchmark with reports from the industry that will help us *improve* our recruitment process. We are in *control*, and more so we are successful with a top candidate who will then also be a high potential who is in the organization for a career and not just a job.

4. Employee engagement

In a study (2012) from the Gallup Management Journal, we can see a mere 14% engaged work population in Western Europe, namely 15% in Germany. This is not a very high and satisfying number.

Regionally, Engaged Employees Most Common in the U.S. and Canada

More than one in three workers in the Middle East and North Africa region are actively disengaged

Region	Engaged	Not Engaged	Actively Disengaged
United States and Canada	29%	54%	18%
Australia and New Zealand	24%	60%	16%
Latin America	21%	60%	19%
Commonwealth of Independent States and nearby countries	18%	62%	21%
Western Europe	14%	66%	20%
Southeast Asia	12%	73%	14%
Central and Eastern Europe	11%	63%	26%
Middle East and North Africa	10%	55%	35%
South Asia	10%	61%	29%
Sub-Saharan Africa	10%	57%	33%
East Asia	6%	68%	26%

2011-2012

GALLUP

Figure 2: Regionally, Engaged Employees Most Common in the U.S. and Canada

The majority of employees have “checked out.” They are not fully engaged in the organization, nor in their jobs. They are at their desk but the passion for the career is lacking. As Jack Welch (former CEO, GE) puts: *“Never mistake activity for accomplishment.”*

What can we do as an organization to keep our employees more engaged? A few steps will be key to success:

- Connection: Leaders must show that they fully care and value their employees and team members. Feedback like: *“good job”* might not be good enough. A leader needs to be present and have an active involvement with their employee’s development.

- Collaboration: Employees like to work in successful teams. Great leaders are team builders of a safe environment for potential and growth.
- Career: Leaders should provide challenging and meaningful work for career opportunities. They also should see the potential of their co-workers. Leaders should foster accountability, collaboration, and initiative.

These three basic elements encourage leaders to set stretch goals for their co-workers and top talents to be more engaged.

5. Employee satisfaction

Employee engagement and satisfaction are not the same. We can certainly be engaged but not satisfied. There are many factors that contribute to satisfaction. Herzberg (1964) focuses on two types of motivators (extrinsic & intrinsic).

Extrinsic motivators represent more the tangible and basic needs similar to Maslow's hierarchy. Elements can be compensation and job security. Not sure that job security is a given in our today's tumultuous times where an employee does not have control over layoffs and re-engineering of departments. However, salary in itself might not be the top motivator to accept a new assignment in volatile times.

Intrinsic motivators are less tangible but focus more on emotional needs. An employee looks for a competitive salary but intrinsic factors like recognition, relationships, growth potential could be even more appealing. The six sigma approach helps us define what is important to the employee: DMAIC - define, measure, analyze, improve, control will assist us in a decision making process. It helps us *define, measure, and analyze* how important salary and job security are. We improve our living situation with a few more Euros in our bank account and be in control of our career. Obviously, that is not a very scientific approach of the six

sigma strategy, but could be helpful to analyze a situation if recognition or salary is preferred.

When assessing a situation for engagement and satisfaction a **mentor program** could be beneficial for a young high potential. Typically, a mentor involves a more senior person who has had a variety of positions throughout his/her career. These days, longevity is not the same as twenty years ago. Our parents' generation felt satisfied and proud of working in one organization for their whole professional lives. These days probably are long gone and a three to four year tenure in an organization is acceptable if not required. A mentor typically is not a manager but a person in a different field who is passionate to grow the potential of more junior employees.

Further to a mentoring program, **executive coaching** sessions encourage and empower potential to grow. Coaching is not counseling, nor mentoring, nor training. Coaching comes from sports coaching, where it makes sense to have a coach. A sports coach is on the sidelines and guides the individual or the team to success. In sports, we understand that we need to flex our muscles, we need to have a training plan to cross the finish line of a marathon, and we need to focus on endurance. How is that different in business? *Professional coaching using sport strategies* (Mueller, 2014) provides an approach that is based in sports but can be successfully transferred into business. We set a goal for a three month project like a 100m sprinter. The longer the project the more time we have to plan; we can focus on our strength with endurance. Again, it is a six sigma approach – no errors can be allowed. In the marathon world, we want to be as close to the world record of 2 hours 02 minutes 57 seconds. (Berlin Marathon 2014, Dennis Kimetto of Kenya)

With great coaching sessions you can set your junior high potential up for success to become that leader in the industry. What does it take? Executive presence with

a great message, taking risks, being present for all the team members and thinking two steps ahead of everybody else. With arrogance, excessive caution, habitual distrust a leader will not success (*Why Ceo's fail*, Dotlich & Cairo, 2003)

Often times, **leadership development** is not tangible and not measurable. DMAIC - define, measure, analyze, improve, control – even though the six sigma approach is working for manufacturing, we need to add the human element, common sense and a sense of humor to the mix. Define and measure leadership is almost impossible. Leadership is a big word that is difficult to outline and define. Simon Sinek's book: "Leader's eat last" (2014) gives us a vivid visual what a leader is. A leader should be in charge, has a clear vision, has many followers, encourages, inspires, and empowers his/her team in an invisible way. This is not something that can be acquired or bought. Leaders are born and being developed and transformed in a humane way. Leaders are not machines in a manufacturing assembly line – they are human beings.

There is always room for improvement for a great leader: with a human to human approach it is possible to empower employee engagement and employee satisfaction. Mentoring and coaching and leadership development should be offered at all times to all levels of our resources if high potential or not. Sometimes we put humans into this high potential box when they are not yet ready for it but it sounds good. Many steps lead to success but we need to be prepared to take them. We are getting ready for the 2020 vision with our big six (sigma) steps.

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