

EMPLOYING SIX SIGMA APPROACHES TO IMPROVE HR FUNCTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Six Sigma is a methodology that focuses on understanding and meeting customers' needs by using a variety of tools, especially statistical analyses, to drive performance metrics. Six Sigma has been around for more than 20 years and heavily influenced by TQM (total quality management) and Zero Defect principles. In its methodology, it asserts that in order to achieve high quality manufacturing and business processes, continued efforts must be made to reduce variations. Human resources professionals have helped with the heavy training requirements whenever their organizations adopt Six Sigma, either in whole or in part. So six sigma plays a pivotal role in equipping your workforce. The paper discusses on the importance and uses of six sigma in HR by the companies who have adopted it. to tackle a variety of strategic human resources projects

INTRODUCTION

Six Sigma is a quality improvement management doctrine developed by Motorola in 1985. It was proclaimed as a new approach to improving quality through statistical measurements and benchmarking. The Six Sigma method attempts to improve such aspects within the operation as profit and speed increment. In today's economy, most people provide services rather than making goods and products. Most of these services operate very inefficiently, and if the same thing happens in a factory, many factories would produce too many defective products and they would be closed down quickly. Six Sigma provides powerful tools to improve those services to levels of accuracy and quality seen so far only in precision manufacturing. Six Sigma took the

business community by storm in the 1990s when General Electric CEO Jack Welch incorporated it in his management philosophy. Six Sigma refers to a defect level of lower than 3.4 defects per million opportunities. This methodology has saved businesses around the world billions in dollars due to its low defect output .

To date, at least 25% of the Fortune 200 companies have a serious Six Sigma program implemented. Most of these implemented programs, however, focus on large scale improvements in defect and process measures, which may also involve employee motivation.

Ever since Six Sigma was first introduced to the business community by Motorola in 1985, this concept has primarily been applied to manufacturing. These days, the application of Six Sigma can be found in areas ranging from facility management and maintenance functions, online market research, supply chain improvement, to such non-manufacturing areas as healthcare management, managerial accounting, and human resources management. And, the formulation and identification of useful theories related to Six Sigma development have also been proposed.

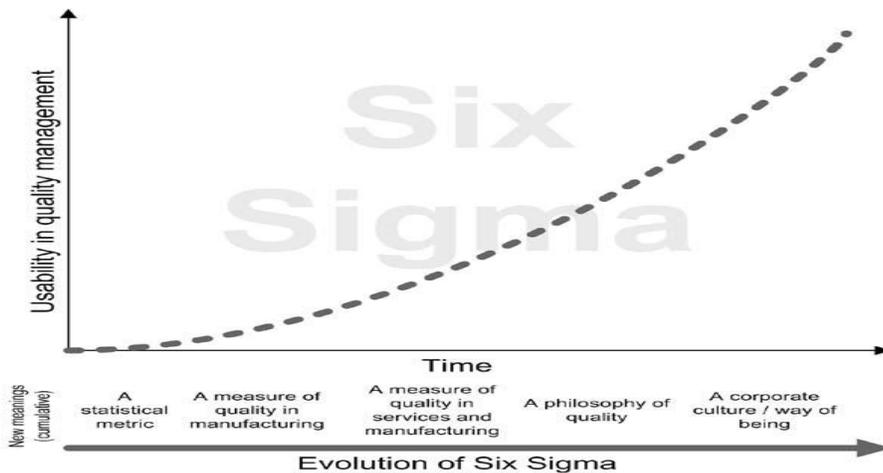
The strategic value of the Six Sigma methodology has also become the focus of studies by both academes and practitioners.

It has been treated as a vehicle for improving competitive advantage by some business executives, and the expanded Six Sigma system, commonly known as Keki Bhote's Proven System, can even help business move from quality excellence to total business excellence.

A quality management metric

Six Sigma as a quality improvement methodology appeared in the 1970s after a Japanese firm took over one of Motorola's TV factories in the United States. It was not long before they were producing the same televisions in the same factory at the same or even lower costs, but with 95 per cent less defects. This significant improvement in performance levels sent a clear message to Motorola; in order to survive it needed to rethink its approach to quality. Bob Galvin, the Motorola chairman at the time, is credited with introducing *Six Sigma* methodologies for the first time in the early 1980s. This new approach brought more than \$16 billion in savings to the company. But it wasn't until 1988 when Motorola earned a National Quality Award that the secrets of how *Six Sigma* methodologies could be applied were publicly announced. In 1989

Motorola announced its new quality objective: 3.4 defects per million. Measuring quality by something such as 99% acceptable success rate was no longer sufficient, *Six Sigma* had pushed the quality demand far higher, tightening the standard.



Soon organisations were claiming that the use of *Six Sigma* was generating savings of the magnitude of more than \$12 billion savings over 5 years at General Electric; more than \$800 million in savings at Honeywell. According to *iSixSigma Magazine*, during the past 20 years, *Six Sigma* projects saved Fortune 500 companies an estimated \$427 billion – the same study found that corporate-wide *Six Sigma* deployments save an average 2 per cent of total revenue per year.

ROLE OF SIX SIGMA IN HRM

Many factors contribute to the success of Six Sigma in HR. Some of these factors will fall within HR's area of responsibility, such as :-

- Understandable, objective and measurable position requirements and performance standards
- Hiring and candidate selection processes driven by the position Requirements
- Identifying leaders for management positions
- Effective, objective and accurate performance appraisals

- Focusing training and development programs on specific position requirements and individual performance
- Integrating individual performance with overall performance and quality management system
- Eliminating waste and inefficiencies
- Tracking and measuring continuous improvement in your HR processes

PROCESS MAPPING FOR HR FUNCTIONS:

One must create a process map for HR department to clearly understand HR functions and prepare for implementing Six Sigma. For the critical steps in the HR functions, one can answer the following questions to identify opportunities for improvement that can be exploited by applying the Six Sigma methodology:

- What is the purpose the HR function or sub-function?
- What are the expected deliverables (people, skills, services, value, reports, etc.)?
- What are the measures of goodness of key-deliverables?
- What are the error opportunities for key-deliverables?
- What improvement activities are carried out in the HR function
- Employee involvement
- Idea and innovation for improvement
- HR effectiveness in fulfilling its intended functions

Six Sigma is used to tackle a variety of strategic human resources projects, such as:

- a. lowering turnover
- b. Paring prescription drug costs
- c. Reducing injury at work
- d. Improving recruiting time-to-fill

Aside from training, other issues you may need to address include: setting rewards and recognition for project teams; staffing those teams geared toward improving your business processes; and instilling Six Sigma methodology as a staple of your workplace culture.

When integrated with human resource management practices, Six Sigma help to improve service levels and efficiency Businesses develop strategies for profit and growth. The strategy is driven down through action plans for execution. Most strategies fail to get down to the floor level and get lost in the middle layers of management, but HR can help execute the profit and growth strategy through the use of Six Sigma. The HR department interacts with and influences every employee; therefore, it's the department best suited to facilitate management change. By using the various approaches of Six sigma in HR modules the project has tried to improve the overall processes of HR in the organization.

How is Six Sigma Different?

Six Sigma is really different from other approaches.

Six Sigma gives you:

- A top-down approach, linked to strategy, sponsored by leaders
- Applicable to all business processes - administrative, HR, Marketing, R&D, etc.
- Fact based, data driven
- Results-oriented, hands-on way to develop critical managerial skills
- Projects based on top and bottom-line impact
- Exponential improvement targets

When done correctly, Six Sigma becomes a way toward organization and cultural development. It is more than a set of tools.

Implementing six sigma methodology:

Two of the questions that have been asked are, "How does HR implement Six Sigma?," and "What can HR do to help Six Sigma initiatives in an organization?"



Strategy for profit and growth.

It must be understood that HR isn't a huge part of any business, but it has a huge effect on every business. Human resources should be considered as human capital. HR must ensure that there's good return on investment in human capital. Typical HR functions include benefits management, compensation, recruitment and skills development. Innovation and change management must also become key functions in the HR department. In addition to managing these functions well, managing idea to innovation, improving HR functions, and accountability of employees and executives must also be implemented.

Steps to implement Six Sigma in HR

1. Establish a Clear cut and significant role of HR for institutionalizing Six Sigma
2. Establish Six Sigma Objectives and Role in HR
3. Seek employee feedback and Identify opportunities for Improvement
4. Establish Six Sigma goals for HR Functions.
5. Formulate, Prioritize projects and form teams
6. Provide Six Sigma Green Belt / Black Belt Training

7. Implement DMAIC for Breakthrough solution

Implementing Six Sigma in HR is no different than applying it in other functions. The key is recognizing gaps or opportunities for improvement by breaking down processes in manageable chunks. The HR function can take the following steps to implement Six Sigma in HR or to facilitate implementation of Six Sigma in the organization:

- Establish a clear and significant role of HR for institutionalizing
- Establish Six Sigma objectives and role in HR
- Seek customer feedback and identify opportunities for improvement
- Establish Six Sigma goals for HR function
- Formulate, prioritize projects and form team
- Provide Six Sigma Green Belt training
- Implement DMAIC for breakthrough solution.

Examples of Six Sigma projects that companies' HR departments have completed include reduction in overtime, reduction in time and cost to hire an employee, reduction in employee retention or turnover, reduction in safety violations, reduction in cost of employee separation, and HR response to internal inquiries for benefits, payroll, promotion and fairness.

Six Sigma implies dramatic improvement through reengineering or innovation of the HR function. HR involvement in achieving corporate growth and profitability must be defined. The HR role must support leadership and departmental activities, provide feedback, and intellectually engage employees in achieving their personal and corporate objectives. Customers expect better, faster and cost-effective solutions. Unless every department performs better, faster and cheaper, the company will be unable to meet customer expectations. HR is no exception to this expectation. It must be set to perform better, faster and more cost-effectively by creating value rather than just rote support of management or training. Creating value could be accomplished through innovative solutions and employee innovation. This is a low-hanging fruit for HR.

Six sigma approach at General Electric

Introduction

The Six Sigma business management strategy developed by Motorola in 1986 has come to be synonymous with quality and success. After over 20 years, why do companies continue to seek out Six Sigma help? What does it take to have a successful Six Sigma rollout? GE's experience launching Six Sigma in the mid-1990s. Though more than 10 years have passed, the GE story remains relevant – their results have been duplicated over and over again by other companies. GE is one of the greatest success stories in business and is still considered to be one of the best companies in the world for innovation and financial success. Firstly the basic background of Six Sigma. Why do companies adopt Six Sigma? The answer is simple – to make money. Poor quality and a failure to focus on customers ultimately cost organizations a lot of cash. The fundamental goal of the Six Sigma methodology is to drive a measurement-based approach that focuses on process improvement and variation reduction with the goal of improving financial results and meeting customer needs. Note the emphasis on “measurement-based.” Companies should only measure what they value – quality, customer satisfaction, and productivity.

GE's tryst with Six Sigma started in 1995 when CEO Jack Welch made it a corporate goal to be a Six Sigma company by 2000. He led from the front and ensured GE attained its Six Sigma goals within the stipulated period. Read on to find out more about Six Sigma and GE. General Electric's (GE) focus on quality started in the late 1980s with the launch of the “Work-Out” program that opened GE culture to ideas from everyone and everywhere. The resultant learning environment prepared the ground for Six Sigma. Credit for the implementation of Six Sigma at GE goes to CEO Jack Welch, who made it a corporate policy to attain Six Sigma goals by 2000. GE adopted most of its Six Sigma concepts and methodology from pioneers such as Motorola.

GE's evolution towards quality

GE began moving towards a focus on quality in the late '80s. Work-Out the start of our journey, opened our culture to ideas from everyone, everywhere, decimated the bureaucracy and made boundaryless behavior a reflexive, natural part of our culture, thereby creating the learning

environment that led to Six Sigma. Now, Six Sigma, in turn, is embedding quality thinking — process thinking — across every level and in every operation of our Company around the globe.

Work-Out in the 1980s defined how we behave. Today, Six Sigma is defining how we work and has set the stage for making our customers feel Six Sigma.

Key Elements of Quality...Customer, Process and Employee

There are three key elements of quality: customer, process and employee. Everything we do to remain a world-class quality company focuses on these three essential elements.

...the Customer

Delighting Customers

Customers are the center of GE's universe: they define quality. They expect performance, reliability, competitive prices, on-time delivery, service, clear and correct transaction processing and more. In every attribute that influences customer perception, we know that just being good is not enough. Delighting our customers is a necessity. Because if we don't do it, someone else will!

...the Process

Outside-In Thinking

Quality requires us to look at our business from the customer's perspective, not ours. In other words, we must look at our processes from the outside-in. By understanding the transaction lifecycle from the customer's needs and processes, we can discover what they are seeing and feeling. With this knowledge, we can identify areas where we can add significant value or improvement from their perspective.

...the Employee

Leadership Commitment

People create results. Involving all employees is essential to GE's quality approach. GE is committed to providing opportunities and incentives for employees to focus their talents and energies on satisfying customers. All GE employees are trained in the strategy, statistical tools and techniques of Six Sigma quality. Training courses are offered at various levels:

- Quality Overview Seminars: basic Six Sigma awareness.
- Team Training: basic tool introduction to equip employees to participate on Six Sigma teams.
- Master Black Belt, Black Belt and Green Belt Training: in-depth quality training that includes high-level statistical tools, basic quality control tools, and Change Acceleration Process and Flow technology tools.
- Design for Six Sigma (DFSS) Training: prepares teams for the use of statistical tools to design it right the first time.

Quality is the responsibility of every employee. Every employee must be involved, motivated and knowledgeable if we are to succeed.

The Six Sigma Strategy

To achieve Six Sigma quality, a process must produce no more than 3.4 defects per million opportunities. An “opportunity” is defined as a chance for nonconformance, or not meeting the required specifications. This means we need to be nearly flawless in executing our key processes. Six Sigma is a vision we strive toward and a philosophy that is part of our business culture.

Key concepts of six sigma

At its core, Six Sigma revolves around a few key concepts.

Critical to Quality: Attributes most important to the customer

Defect: Failing to deliver what the customer wants

Process Capability: What your process can deliver

Variation: What the customer sees and feels

Stable Operations: Ensuring consistent, predictable processes to improve what the customer sees and feels

Design for Six Sigma: Designing to meet customer needs and process capability

Training

Six Sigma implementation at General Electric started with a heavy emphasis on training the workforce for data-based problem analysis.

GE required all exempt employees to undertake a 13-day, 100 hour training program in Six Sigma methodologies and complete a Six Sigma project by the end of 1998.

The training covered the DMAIC procedure:

- Definition or identification of the process
- Measurement of process output
- Analyzing process inputs for criticality
- Improving process by modifying inputs
- Controlling process by controlling the appropriate input

Employees completing the initial course went through follow-up training to reinforce these newly acquired skills.

Mentoring

The success story of Six Sigma and GE would not have been possible without GE's system of mentoring programs. Full-time Master Black Belts, hired specifically for implementation of Six Sigma, led the process change. Each Master Black Belt trained and mentored key process employees for the Black Belt level. Employees selected for Black Belt underwent four-month training and applied Six Sigma tools at work under the guidance of the Master Black Belt mentor. GE soon deployed full time Black Belt teams to implement Six Sigma projects throughout GE. Part time project leaders or employees who received Six Sigma training that were placed on Six Sigma projects only became Green Belts.

Leadership

General Electric's experience in the implementation of Six Sigma shows that the best of training and mentoring efforts would crumble without effective leadership. Jack Welch, GE's CEO supported the Six Sigma initiative not just with the necessary financial resources, but also through securing vital commitment from both the senior executives and the workforce. Welch linked promotion and bonus to quality improvement. Forty percent of each top

Create excellence in process delivery – To deliver the day-to-day service consistently and focus more on strategic goals, HR must make sure that its processes run smoothly with no or minimal problems. *Six Sigma* is an excellent way of delivering process excellence.

Reduce defects – From queries that are time consuming to resolve to wrong salaries or inaccurate employee data, all HR processes are prone to producing multiple defects during delivery. It is therefore a high priority to detect and minimise the number of defects produced. Achieving the *Six Sigma* level or 99.9997 per cent flawless transactions, may not be possible in all HR processes, but by taking the *Six Sigma* approach defects can often be reduced substantially.

Reduce scrap/increase efficiency – Through lean techniques, combined with *Six Sigma* methodologies and tools, HR can work to reduce resources lost in ineffective, sometimes unnecessary tasks and still deliver the service within the required standards.

Create a quality focused mindset – For HR to deliver value, the whole function must be focused on quality, as measured via service level agreements (SLAs) or customer satisfaction metrics. The *Six Sigma* philosophy introduces this kind of mindset and, in organisation-wide implementations, even embeds it into the culture of the organisation.

Benefit from best practice – For HR to undertake effective reviews of processes that will deliver maximum benefit, *Six Sigma* offers best practice tools and techniques which have been proven in many organisations.

Bring clarity to the processes – Processes can contain hidden problems that sooner or later affect the service being delivered, such as bottlenecks, unduly long processing time, or a significant number of defects. Two of the main phases of *Six Sigma* improvement projects focus specifically on bringing clarity to the process and its metrics, using statistical tools that can offer

deep insight into the inner workings of the process, as well as the external factors affecting it, enabling the delivery of improvements.

Use a structured scientific approach – *Six Sigma* is, of course, not the only option for product or service improvement. However it is a proven method based on well-structured scientific methodologies that provides a framework to be applied in any process improvement project.

Speak the same language – Time may be lost due to communication issues that arise from use of terminology or jargon. *Six Sigma* offers a consistent language that reduces confusion in delivering improvements.

Maintain control of your processes – It is a common problem that an efficiently designed process can quickly develop issues and revert to inefficiency. One of the tasks of *Six Sigma* is to make sure that after delivery, the new or improved process will continue to produce consistent results for as long as the process functions.

Strengthen your business case – Given the proven track record that *Six Sigma* has in both the service and production industry, with some of the world's largest organisations benefiting from its results, HR's business case to improve itself can gain more credibility if based on *Six Sigma*; especially where the methodology is already used in other parts of the business.

Advantages of HR having Six Sigma

- Reduction in Overtime
- Reduction in time and Cost to hire employees
- Reduction in employee's retention or turnover
- Reduction in safety violations
- Reduction in cost of employee separation
- Fairness in internal inquires, payroll, performance appraisal & promotions
- Improvement & Innovation of HR Functions
- Achievement of corporate growth & profitability
- Innovative solutions & employees innovations

If you make Six Sigma a strategy in your HR Department , the end result will get reflected in sustainable bottom line improvement of Hospital. The average time taken to develop a plan and improve a process takes 3-12 months, depending on the scope and goals of the organization.

Six sigma in recruitments

The talent pool available in the market for companies. Companies decided to use Six Sigma for improving their results from recruitment process .



Now we would like to understand how companies can get better results with Six Sigma. Companies goes through **DMAIC** in the following way.

- **Define** - Using appropriate Six Sigma tools, it defines the problem as inability to meet SLA for recruitment. This problem is converted into a charter document and discussed in a senior management meeting.
- **Measure phase** - Team prepares a detailed process map of the current process, finalizes the CTQ (A **CTQ tree** (Critical-to-quality tree) is used to decompose broad customer requirements into more easily quantified requirements. It now measures and documents its current process performance to be at sigma level = 2.3 and fixes a target of improvement at 3.0

- **Analyze phase** - Using appropriate six sigma techniques, team now identifies that various factors that influence the recruitment success. These are listed as -
 1. Understanding of hiring needs from departments properly.
 2. Identifying the right approach for recruitment drive
 3. Selecting the message (including introduction to REAR Digital end career prospects)
 4. Selecting the right media for recruitment.
 5. The short-listing mechanism.
 6. Making the offer with terms and conditions
 7. On-boarding and induction process.
- **Analyze phase part II** - Team at now identifies the factors that are critical to recruitment success. For this it carries out a survey on good (selected people or people who got an offer) people who did not join in a recent drive.
- **Improve phase** – Team identifies solution alternatives using techniques like creative thinking, benchmarking. The new alternate process (improved process map) is documented, piloted, validated and implemented. The team records the benefits with the next recruitment drive. Other advertising company continues as before.
- It has no mechanism to learn from its own mistakes or to learn from mistakes of others (and no data driven approach to reach conclusions, no management support to approve good recommendations when they arrive)
- **Control phase** - Team puts in the right controls in the improved process so that the benefits can be sustained over a period of time. It carries out mistake proofing at few places, and creates a control plan with audit check-lists to ensure that desired behavior changes does actually happen.
- Finally with a better process in place and removal of gaps, delays, errors, and ineffective communication (at the right places), it starts attracting the best talent more effectively.
- To put in brief Six Sigma philosophy is about using a systematic, scientific, data driven approach that leads to the best possible process (the best does not remain best for long so there is a need for continual improvement and more improvement projects periodically)

Six sigma in training and development

Businesses would go under if they did not employ the right people to help run their day to day operations. Employee training and development are often key to the success of any business. Often upper management is tasked with leaving the daily run of the show in the hands of auxiliary employees and they want to be secure and feel safe about doing so. The best way to ensure this is by giving those employees the proper training in order to make sure they develop as they should. Capable employees help businesses expand and run smoothly. If they are intelligent and have been properly trained in all the aspects of the job they are doing, they have more opportunities to advance and benefit the company in further ways. There are many companies who decide that cross-training capable employees will also prove beneficial in times of crisis or emergency.

HR-audit and implementing Six sigma

Six Sigma techniques and methodologies are quite different from other quality improvement techniques because they are not self-sustaining in nature. Goals and objectives that can be derived through Six Sigma depend on a number of variable factors and inputs such as the quality of deployment and the existing organizational culture.



Six sigma in managing the hr-payroll and absenteeism

Attendance and Payroll processes have opportunities of improvement in terms of:

Accuracy (Correctness)

In terms of pay:

There are many software solutions which companies have implemented for accuracy in payrolls one of them is pay scale. Pay Scale is a market leader in global compensation data. With the world's largest database of individual employee compensation profiles, Pay Scale provides an immediate and precise snapshot of the job market.

In terms of attendance:

Company has employed a solution for attendance also called as Amcheck.

AmCheck offers the latest in time and attendance tracking solutions comprising of scalable and innovative software.

Productivity (turn around time improvement).

Its time and attendance management software system solutions add to company's improved productivity, accuracy, and reliability in timekeeping and payroll administration processes. Am Check's web-based time and attendance management systems helps business to reduce the amount of time needed to prepare time sheets & attendance records for payroll through automated time collection & calculation. Trim down labor cost through better workforce management, minimizes errors, and help enhance your strategic decision making for the organization with real time information accessibility.

Using six sigma to link strategic HRM

The common use of generic strategy typologies in strategic human resource management (SHRM), such as the typology proposed by Michael Porter (1980), is inaccurate and probably obsolete. SHRM research that examines the performance effects of human resource (HR) systems does not need to invoke the strategy construct in order to fulfill its goals. By borrowing a few basic analytic techniques from six sigma, it is possible to identify, with considerable

precision, the unique people-related drivers of an organization's business results. The main purpose is to deliver a decision support tool aiding the decision making process concerning the strategic management of the department of human resource management.

CONCLUSION

Although HR is not a big department in most organizations, HR processes have a major impact on the employee's efforts for delivering services or product. HR people handle the responsibility of retaining the employees while balancing the financial needs of the company. Compensation and benefit areas taken care of by the HR department include payroll administration, time and attendance management, leave policy, stock options and so on. Six Sigma Projects such as reducing time for the paycheck deposition process, faster performance review systems and eligibility study for ESOPs can be considered for the betterment of these activities of the HR. There could be a need for Six Sigma projects like improving multiple payroll systems for remote locations and reducing errors in employee information database.

The key benefits of six sigma have been:

- Reduce the time required to hire an employee
- Improve employee on-boarding and orientation processes
- Reduce expenditures for Recruitment
- Improve timeliness and the value of employee performance reviews
- Reduce absenteeism
- Improve training efficiency
- Improve employee satisfaction
- Identify and correct retention issue
- Reduce Incentive Compensation errors
- Eliminate Overpayments to Terminated Salaried Employees
- Improving grievance handling process.
- Consolidation of employee information databases
- Integration of multiple payroll systems for remote locations

- Design of job posting templates for recruiters.
- Increase retention using exit interview information

The HR personnel have to take care of areas like employee absenteeism, dispute resolution, health and safety issues, union negotiations, interpersonal communication and discrimination and harassment issues. Six Sigma projects can be undertaken to address the discrimination and harassment by way of monitoring and compliance audit, systems for improved communication among employees and executives Six Sigma projects can aim at overall organizational development with regards to improvements in the career and succession planning, leadership, change management, workplace planning and organization, performance improvement and communication programs. Staffing, Training and Retention - One basic responsibility of the HR department is staffing, background checks, selection and training and retention of employees. They have to design and schedule training and development programs for new employees, as well as existing ones. They also have to handle employee contracts for permanent and temporary employees and manage the process of relocation and outsourcing of employees. They have to manage the retrenchment issues and exit interviews. There can be projects like creating self-learning and evaluation modules for the employees. Projects to improve the hit rate for job postings followed by quick responses to the applicants, reduction in unnecessary security checks and so on can be undertaken by the HR department as Six Sigma projects

Findings

- By implementing six sigma in training and development and other modules of HR the attrition rate of employees has reduced because there is more transparency in the processes.
- The employee satisfaction has improved and the employee motivation level has gone up because of six sigma implementation.
- The efficiency has gone up for the processes.
- The processes have become faster and data has become easily available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Six Sigma can be used in various other fields of HR .

1. Ensuring HR professionals have the right skills and knowledge: Rear Digital has implemented Six sigma in majority of its HR processes but still there are loopholes in the system i.e. six sigma tools have merely been implemented but very less attention has been placed to the Training required for the full knowledge of these processes, so merely implementing the processes would not be much of a benefit..

2. Marketing its potential contribution early in the initiative: The company should have presented the HR department with a strategic framework of implementation process of appropriate six sigma processes.

- Gathering data that supports the need for attention to the people side of Six Sigma. Potential sources include Six Sigma publications, case studies, conference sessions, and executives in companies that have already implemented Six Sigma.
- Deriving lessons from previous organizational initiatives in which people issues and/or HR actions played an acknowledged role in success or failure.
- Meeting with senior executives to discuss their business/Six Sigma goals and then identifying areas where HR could provide very specific and measurable help.
- Speaking to Six Sigma Leaders and Champions in the language of Six Sigma, not the language of HR. These executives are typically interested in improving efficiency (i.e., internal cost) and effectiveness (i.e., what the customer sees as "defects"). HR needs to understand what the executives care about and pitch HR's services in relevant terms.
- Taking the lead and applying Six Sigma successfully within the HR function.

3. Effectively choosing improvement processes: The most effective human resources (HR) Six Sigma projects are ones that focus on the external customer and are in sync with the strategic goals of the business.

In the book *The Strategy-Focused Organization*, authors Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton introduced "The Balanced Scorecard" to make business strategy a continuous process owned by all aspects of an organization. It presented four perspectives for examining a business starting with an external focus and moving internally.

- Financial Perspective – If we succeed, how will we look to our shareholders?
- Customer Perspective – To achieve my vision, how must we look to my customers?
- Internal Perspective – To satisfy my customers, at which processes must we excel?
- Learning and Growth Perspective – To achieve my vision, how must our organization learn and improve?

4. Maintain absolute confidentiality: In most Six Sigma human resources projects, the data required is confidential and personal. The members of the Six Sigma team must insure that:

- The team will not use the data in a punitive manner.
- The team will not use the data to identify areas to cut costs and eliminate jobs.
- The data is kept absolutely confidential. The team may require legal assurances to assert this.

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