

Online Yellow Belt Article

Why Training Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belts Is So Important

The critical role of Yellow Belts is not widely understood in many organizations that have a Lean Six Sigma (LSS) initiative. Ignoring the importance of Yellow Belts and underinvesting in Yellow Belt training can have a negative impact on LSS implementation and, more significantly, sustainment.

In order to successfully implement and sustain a LSS initiative, there are three things that need to be addressed by the leadership team. These three things are culture, strategy and process.



Of the three, culture is by far the most challenging. If LSS is to be sustained, the concepts of continuous improvement and LSS need to be integrated into the organizational culture.

To change culture requires (among other things) a “critical mass” of employees all pulling in the same direction. All too often organizations launch LSS initiatives by training only a small subset of employees as Green Belts and/or Black Belts. The Green and Black Belts become the trained personnel that lead the LSS projects. The problem with the strategy of training only Green and Black Belts is that the overwhelming majority of the organization receives no significant LSS training and has no buy-in or understanding of LSS. True, a team of highly trained individuals are capable of using LSS to drive process improvement, but this has done nothing to address the culture of the organization.

Yellow Belt training, which normally takes 1-2 days, is critical to beginning the process of culture change. If an organization is to be successful in making LSS and continuous

improvement part of the way the organization operates on a day-to-day basis, a significant proportion of the employees need to understand and embrace LSS. They do not need to lead improvement teams, but they do need to understand why the organization is embracing LSS, participate on the LSS teams and be supportive of LSS activities. Yellow Belt training is used to address the need to educate a “critical mass” of employees.

The challenge many organizations face is the cost and time it takes to train large numbers of employees as Yellow Belts. In larger organization, there may be a need to literally train thousands of employees as Yellow Belts. This is why the University of North Florida Center for Quality and Continuous Improvement has created an online Yellow Belt course, which organizations can leverage to begin the process of culture change and increase the probability of a sustainable LSS initiative. The online course offers the opportunity to lower the cost, the time and the “inconvenience” of classroom training. Because the course is online, employees can take the course at their own pace at the times of their choosing. It can be done all at once, or broken into smaller pieces. And, because an in classroom instructor is not required, the cost to train employees drops considerably, suddenly enabling the organization to more rapidly and effectively drive culture change.

The online course offers a second advantage, as well. It allows individuals that want to learn more about LSS an avenue to doing so with a minimum of cost and inconvenience. For example, a person wanted to see if LSS is something that their organization should consider, or an individual desiring to personally learn more about LSS, can take the Yellow Belt class as an avenue to quickly and easily determining their level of interest and if they wish to explore next steps by contacting a LSS professional.