

RAPID ACTION FOR LEAN SIX SIGMA CASE STUDY

A More Profitable Way to Develop Effective Lean Six Sigma Belts

While becoming a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt is considered a badge of honor in many organizations, the training required often produces minimal returns on investment as evidenced by low rates of Green Belt project completions. Read how one company's different approach to Belt certification using a Lean Six Sigma-harmonized team engagement process has dramatically improved its return on Green Belt investment and expanded employee engagement in Lean Six Sigma across the entire company.

NewPage, a Fortune 500 paper products company, is no stranger to Lean Six Sigma. Over the past 10 years, it has honed and perfected the deployment of Lean Six Sigma in order to meet the challenges of a relentlessly competitive industry. What sets NewPage apart from other large companies that have invested in Lean Six Sigma is the innovative and highly-profitable approach it employs in developing its cadre of Lean Six Sigma Belts.

The introduction of Lean Six Sigma at NewPage began when Bob Crescenzi, a veteran Deployment Leader, was hired by the company's new CEO to replicate the success the General Electric Company had experienced with Lean Six Sigma. While content with GE's success, Crescenzi was also mindful of the significant training expenses incurred by GE and its reported low rate of project completion at the Green Belt-level. Crescenzi had experimented with a different model for Lean Six Sigma implementation in his prior role, and was determined to fully execute this novel innovation at NewPage.

The Rapid Lean Six Sigma Belt

Though fairly common-sense, what Crescenzi had in mind was contrary to most Lean Six Sigma textbook deployment models. Instead of training Green Belts "out of the gate" on statistical tools, train first on a simplified approach to leading quick-win teams and pull in Lean and Six Sigma tools on an as-needed basis with the assistance of more highly-trained Black Belts.

Crescenzi's solution utilized an improvement method named **Rapid Action** designed by Leap Technologies that combines concepts from the "GE Work-Out!" with classic Lean Six Sigma disciplines, packaged into a highly



Developing Lean Six Sigma Belts with Rapid Action



286

Rapid Lean Six Sigma (RLSS)
projects teams completed
over three years

225

RLSS Belts awarded

1700

Employees engaged

\$20M

added savings

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reliable, easy-to-learn project kit. Crescenzi had very successfully deployed Rapid Action at his prior company to fill the gap between classic DMAIC study and analysis-intensive projects (requiring experienced Black Belt support) and quick-win opportunities that are usually solvable using frontline know-how.

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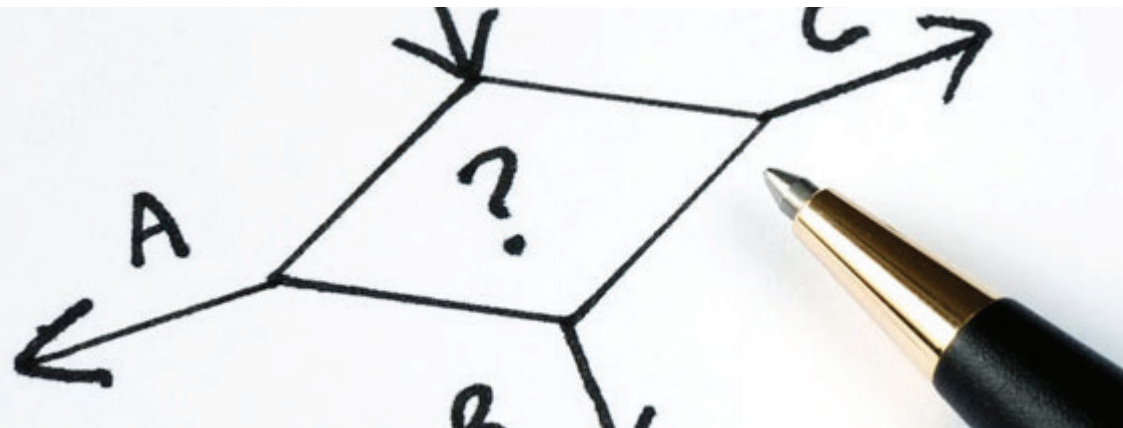
Crescenzi noted, “In my prior experiences with deploying Lean Six Sigma, I discovered that Rapid Action was a great training ground for potential Green and Black Belts because it teaches practical team facilitation skills often missing in conventional Lean Six Sigma curriculums.”

Crescenzi’s strategy for NewPage was to position Rapid Action as the entry level for Lean Six Sigma Belt certification in order to reduce training costs, improve initial project completion and open the door for faster and broader participation in Lean Six Sigma at the frontlines of the organization. In this deployment model, individuals who successfully lead a Rapid Lean Six Sigma Team (the name for Rapid Action-supported projects at NewPage) qualify as candidates for advanced training in Lean Six Sigma method and tools.

Crescenzi’s other rationale for adopting the Rapid Lean Six Sigma project approach was his conviction that fifty percent or more of the process improvement opportunities at NewPage were “harvest-ready fruit” – problems with relatively simple solutions, but which required the commitment of frontline employees to fully resolve.

The “DNA” of Faster Improvement

-  Simplify the change process to engage more people.
-  Use “sprint” timeframes to keep employees motivated.
-  Empower employees with clear direction and support their ideas.
-  Use teams to build confidence and accountability for action.
-  Celebrate completions, not activity.



Two-for-One Return on Rapid Lean Six Sigma Training

One of the first Rapid Lean Six Sigma projects completed at NewPage was a clear demonstration of the superior return on investment from Crescenzi’s innovative deployment model. The improvement team, led by a home-office

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department supervisor, was asked to tackle the challenge of reducing finished product shipping costs from the company's numerous paper mills. The project leader (trained in the Rapid Action Toolkit through a two-day workshop) guided the team through an initial three-hour meeting to brainstorm ideas and then prioritize and select the best ideas for testing. From there, the team made effective use of the action-planning templates and weekly meeting structure provided in the toolkit and ultimately completed its assignment in less than 60 days.

“*I was amazed by the energy generated in the first team meeting and impressed by the structure and tools of the process that empowered the team leader to run the meeting effectively and on time.*”

According to the Black Belt assigned to mentor the team, “I was amazed by the energy generated in the first team meeting and impressed by the structure and tools of the process that empowered the team leader to run the meeting effectively and on time. Participants on the team were using concepts out of the DMAIC playbook and picking up the language of Lean Six Sigma on a pull basis, just when needed.”

The team named itself “Operation Convoy” and implemented a number of quick-win solutions such as standardizing truck loading patterns and using economic order quantities at order entry to generate more than \$100,000 in annual shipping costs. For the supervisor leading the project, the experience was both positive and manageable, as evidenced by the comment, “I was concerned coming in that learning Lean Six Sigma would be a burden I couldn't afford given my other duties. But I was pleasantly surprised by how easy it was for me to lead the team by following the Rapid Action guidebook, and very excited by the results my team was able to produce in a short period of time.”

Institutionalizing Rapid Lean Six Sigma

In the first three years of Lean Six Sigma Deployment under Crescenzi's leadership, NewPage completed approximately 286 Rapid Lean Six Sigma projects engaging more than 1,700 employees and adding more than \$20M to total Lean Six Sigma savings of roughly \$129M.

Just as important, these 286 projects were all completed within roughly 60 days and provided an opportunity for an equal number of managers, supervisors and high potential employees to lead an improvement project, learn Lean Six Sigma basics and qualify to enroll in Green Belt training.

“*Benefiting from Lean Six Sigma begins by having a disciplined approach to leading teams. Rapid Action not only provides the foundation training for Belts, it's a pay-for-itself investment.*”

More than six years later, leading a Rapid Lean Six Sigma project is still a mandatory prerequisite for any NewPage employee that interested in becoming a Green or Black Belt. As Crescenzi says, “Benefiting from Lean Six Sigma begins by having a disciplined approach to leading teams. Rapid Action not only provides the foundation training for Belts, it's a pay-for-itself investment.”



20+
YEARS EXPERIENCE

250+
CLIENT USERS

5,000+
COMPLETED PROJECTS

35,000+
EMPLOYEES ENGAGED

\$250M
DOCUMENTED SAVINGS

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The “All in One” Team Engagement Toolkit for Accelerating Results



Prelaunch Planner



Action Accelerator



Scripted Meeting Guides



Quick Read Booklets



Idea Sorting, Prioritizing and Tracking Posters



e-Templates & Tools



LEARN MORE ABOUT RAPID ACTION FOR LEAN SIX SIGMA

Are you interested in accelerating results and increasing engagement from your organization’s change management and continuous improvement initiatives? Take a look “inside the box” of the most reliable process available for rapid, team-based improvement.



Call 800.254.6805 or email to request@improvefaster.com to schedule a demo of the Rapid Action Toolkit.



For more information including Case Studies and White Papers please visit www.improvefaster.com.

Leap Technologies

Improve faster through better team engagement!

Since 1993, Leap Technologies has helped organizations across the globe elevate return on investment in Lean Six Sigma.

Organizations including HealthPartners, M&T Bank, Mosaic, Momentum Chemicals, Nashville Metropolitan Airport and Valspar among many others have integrated Leap Team Engagement Toolkits into their Lean Six Sigma deployments to productively engage more leaders and employees in “the improvement game” while simultaneously improving Belt skills and productivity.

For organizations looking for a faster, better and more affordable way to leverage the power of Lean Six Sigma, Leap Technologies is the resource of choice.