

INSIDE: Investing in learning and development by Ruth Stuart, Research Adviser at CIPD



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Investing in learning and development

Ruth Stuart, Research Adviser at CIPD speaks to Editor Laura Evans about learning and development and why it's an important investment for organisations...

Organisations are increasingly tapping into talent already employed within their business. This can have great benefits including reducing costs, and protecting skills you may need in the future. In the CIPD 2015 Learning and Development survey many organisations reported a lack of confidence in using technology, and yet also predict growth in areas such as e-learning, virtual classrooms and social learning. ¹

The report also highlighted that many organisations and businesses are still struggling to evaluate the impact of L&D activity on the business. Ruth Stuart, Research Adviser at CIPD explains about the main benefits of L&D.

“Learning and development can comprise of a lot of different activities”, explains Stuart.

“But overall it’s really about developing employees, so they can contribute to organisational performance. Within a lot of organisations it’s also about encouraging change across the entire organisation, and using L&D as a way to develop the culture of the organisation, and in turn develop the business. It’s no longer just about training in its traditional form.”

As businesses evolve at a rapid pace, L&D is integral to help this progression. At a time when budget cuts are significant throughout the whole of the public sector, organisations are encouraged to develop long-term sustainable growth. Learning and development can help with this progression and transform businesses, as Stuart outlines.

“If we look at capability within organisations, if we can develop employee and organisational capability, that can be a key driver towards developing businesses or transforming an organisation.



“If there is a situation where they need to make a radical change to a business model, making sure that you have got employees with the right skills in the right place is essential to that process.

“For learning and development initiatives to really have a powerful impact they need to be aligned to business needs,” she continues.

“There has to be a critical component of an L&D programme, and the actual strategy, that is really aligned to business needs. Otherwise, you might end up investing in something that won’t have an impact on the overall performance of the organisation.”

There can be many different methods of learning and development, and the CIPD 2015 report identified the most used and most effective ones. Different organisations will benefit from different methods, depending on their goals and business needs. In the report, on-the-job training, in-house development programmes, and coaching by line managers or peers came out as the most commonly used and most effective development methods, in line with findings from previous years.

Ensuring the learning initiatives are worth the investment can be part of the process of deciding on the right method. Stuart believes that there has to be a really robust evaluation process as a starting point.

“If you have a robust evaluation process at the start and align that with your business needs, that allows you to see if the initiatives that you introduce are the right ones,” she says.

“It’s important to have the ability to measure and understand the goals of the initiative and the impact it’s designed to have. Looking at the overall impact, whether they are learning new skills on a training course, or coaching or mentoring on an online programme, how are those employees really transferring the skills to the workplace, and what is the ultimate bearing on their performance and therefore the organisations performance.”

Before introducing training initiatives into the organisation and to employees, Stuart believes that consideration is needed to the business strategy first and foremost, and what the training could bring to that strategy.

“There are many different ways of looking at that,” she explains. “It could be that you have the strategy around business growth, so it’s therefore looking at what are the capabilities you might need for the future, and the changing the business environment, and putting the steps in place to develop the right initiatives – to develop the skills you need for the future.

“For the employees, learning and development can have a really important role in regards to developing an individual’s long term career. I think if you look at all the ways an individual can develop, whether that be technical skills, or more leadership or behavioural skills – investing the time in developing yourself can impact your individual performance, but also set you on a course for different or larger roles in the future.”

In regards to growth and the organisation moving forward, I asked Stuart what role continuous improvement can play in learning and development strategies, and whether the two go hand in hand.

She explains: “Continuous development and improvement has a really important part to play. I don’t think learning and development should be viewed as a one off initiative, it should be viewed as part of your day to day life.

“You might have a meeting and a situation where you learn something new, and to me that’s learning and development. If you have the time to reflect on what you’ve learnt every day then that’s part of continuing to develop your skills and capabilities.”

She also explained that it’s important as an organisation to send the right messages to your employees in regards to developing as a business and themselves.

“It’s about setting a culture of continuous improvement, she says. “It’s about everyone in the organisation, from leader’s right down to every employee, making it a real expectation that everybody focuses on continually developing themselves.

“Having role models in the organisation who can really highlight that and make it really apparent that continuous improvement is important to them no matter how senior they are. That’s a really important message to send”, she concluded.

¹ http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/learning-development_2015.pdf



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Continual Learning, Continual Improvement

Keith Parsons, Managing Director, Dembridge provides an insight into learning and delivering Lean Six Sigma....

People see Lean Six Sigma as a massive toolbox. It is much more than that.

It is true that there are many, many tools that can be used to bring about improvements, but the real objective of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) is to bring about changes in behaviour – culture change. This cultural change, as we know, can take years to embed within the organisation. It is a journey. To realise this, “it is about developing employees” as Ruth Stuart at CIPD quite rightly cites.

All organisations invest in their people in order for them to contribute to the organisation’s overall performance. To do this successfully, capability on all fronts – employee and organisational – is fundamental to realising a return on this investment. Having a structured learning programme in place significantly enhances the chances of improving capability.

Cultural Building Blocks

All too often these LSS methodologies are treated as a group of tools to be applied rather than a new cultural behavioural pattern that starts with the executive team. Too much focus has been applied to teaching the tools related to these methodologies in a two-level focus on embedding the Lean and Six Sigma cultures into the organisation. As a result, these initiatives are often treated as projects where people are trained, problems are solved, and the immediate problem is to put to bed while the organisation goes back to business as usual. When this occurs, savings are short-lived and the problems that were put to bed soon wake up and have to be addressed again and again.



“Gains often last for only a short period of time unless there is a significant change in the fundamental culture within the organisation.”

The person that makes the LSS methodology a success within an organisation is not an LSS Black Belt or even an LSS Master Black Belt. The people who make LSS a success are the executives who will not be satisfied with any waste within the organisation and who won’t allow anything but exceptionally good products and services to be provided within or as output from the organisation he/she is responsible for. It is the executive who doesn’t have excellence as a goal, but as a standard of today’s performance for himself/herself and everyone within his/her organisation, who is the ideal role model for the organisation.



These are hard requirements to meet, but it's what is required to be successful in today's highly competitive environment. LSS Green Belts and LSS Black Belts can bring about significant changes and improvement in organisational performance, but these gains often last for only a short period of time unless there is a significant change in the fundamental culture within the organisation. Business excellence in an organisation encompasses the areas of strategic focus or intent, customer loyalty/advocacy, employee delight, and seamless process integration. All the business excellence models have these areas incorporated in their models in different ways

Alignment, Mindset & Capability

There are many methodologies to choose from when considering organisational improvement and arguably, the fastest growing is Lean Six Sigma. Why? Lean and Six Sigma – both different methodologies – offer different objectives. Lean deals primarily with efficiency whilst Six Sigma focuses more on effectiveness. So, combined, this all-embracing continuous improvement methodology provides a mechanism for not only improving efficiency (Lean) but also focuses on quality (Six Sigma).

It is important to note that LSS methodologies are all organisation-wide operational philosophies/strategies with accountability and strategic focus. The real value of LSS starts to show when it is integrated with the organisation's strategic plan, helping to implement that plan with a focus on the end-use customers. In order to achieve the true benefits of

LSS, projects will cross-organisational boundaries and be focused on business processes. Sustained strategic results can be achieved when this is done. When applied to a business process, the benefits obtained move the organisation toward world-class performance in that business process.

At the heart of all successful LSS programmes is an effective infrastructure that translates the strategic goals and activity areas of the organisation into short-term action plans that maximise value and provide proper governance and management, along with the monitoring of results.

Lean Six Sigma is viewed by many to be their primary vehicle for positive change owing to its unique structured approach to effecting improvement. This structured approach, known as DMAIC (see next section for definition) takes people through a phased approach facilitating a clear pathway to achieving the organisational goals.

Needless to say, learning and understanding the LSS methodology in order to facilitate positive change can bring huge rewards to both the organisation and to the employees. As outlined, this learning needs to be aligned to the strategic agenda of the organisation and whilst LSS is generic in its nature, it is important that the learning programme is developed that 'fits' with organisational framework. Time spent on this development will ultimately be rewarding to all concerned.



Design & Delivery

To truly capitalise on the benefits of continuous improvement all people involved in the process also need to be involved in the improvement project. Working in isolation does not work and the inclusion of all the different functions in the project is central to its success as the aim to achieve a goal that delivers a seamless process flow cross-functionally.

There are many ways that this can be achieved, although the proven process is illustrated below and one that is highly recommended.

It is important to note that attending a training programme and learning about LSS is just the beginning. Obtaining a certificate does not mean that you are a fully fledged 'practitioner'. A return on investment is a fundamental requirement to any organisation and only when the learning is translated into tangible benefits can this ROI be quantified. This can be a hard task for newly trained employees which is why post support from experienced experts is pivotal to the learning extension and of course, that all important ROI!

But, the technical training is still insufficient in order to bring about this much desired positive change. This training must include the critical managing change elements without which will severely

suppress the vital stakeholder engagement objective. Included within the training then, should include at least the following, in addition to the tools and techniques of LSS:

- Managing Change
- Emotional Cycles of Change
- Resistance to Change
- RACI
- Developing High Performing Teams
- Stakeholder Management & Analysis
- Brainstorming Techniques
- Leadership

A learning programme that combines the mechanics of LSS with the necessary 'soft skills' is critical in order to get the best outcomes from the methodologies of LSS. The fundamental requirement of engaging people and developing a culture of continuous improvement cannot be overstated.

A Framework for Progression

Typically, companies enlist the expertise of consultants to assist them in delivering improvements against a defined strategy and its associated objectives.

To fulfil all objectives of your continuous improvement journey, it must embrace the three core pillars:

Quality, Efficiency and Excellence.



Fundamental to the successful execution of these three pillars is a structured approach that ensures integration. This starts with a review of the organisation as a whole and drilling down from this into its components.

Only through this approach can all of the pillars be effectively identified, measured and improved. The model illustrated here is a proven approach in delivering against corporate and functional strategy and ensures integration.

Often, people trained in LSS obtain the theoretical intelligence (and hang a nice certificate on the wall) but don't actually deliver the results expected by the organisation. This is due, typically, to the absence of

an identified project(s) prior to the training that dilutes the requisite ROI. The most successful organisations undertaking LSS training have clear pre-training briefs, agreed projects and post training de-briefs with a 'hit-the-ground-running' attitude post training. These identified projects are aligned to the corporate / functional strategy.

Just the Facts

- Lean Six Sigma is concerned with behavioural change
- Cultural development is central to success of Lean Six Sigma
- Alignment to corporate / functional strategy is pivotal
- Clear project(s) identification prior to any training is important
- The tools of LSS are just that – tools
- Executive sponsorship is critical
- Return on Investment can be significant

Any organisation that can tick all of these boxes are in a strong position in creating an environment of organisational improvement and employees that are driven, inspired and motivated to realise the desired return on investment.

So, why train staff in Lean Six Sigma? Read on...



Keith Parsons
Managing Director
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Why train staff in Lean Six Sigma?

Dr Andy Slaney, Principal Consultant and Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt, BSI explains the benefits to organisations of using the training initiative Lean Six Sigma...

With its roots in manufacturing, Lean Six Sigma is now being applied across numerous diverse industries, in both the public and private sectors. Irrespective of whether the organisation involved deals predominantly with products, information or people – or a combination of all 3.

Lean Six Sigma is about improving organisational performance and sustainability. It does this through the development of a precise understanding of customer needs, and how to meet those needs in the most effective and efficient way.

When utilised correctly, Lean Six Sigma can provide the organisational structure, project methodology, toolkit, philosophy and motivation to understand and seriously challenge poorly performing processes. That is irrespective of institutional objectives.

Lean vs Six Sigma

In order to understand the benefits of Lean Six Sigma training it is necessary to understand a little more about Lean Six Sigma itself.

Firstly, the techniques and philosophies of Lean place a great focus on ensuring that processes are designed and operated to fulfil the needs of the customer and that all activities can be regarded as value adding. Lean also stresses the need for processes to have unhindered 'flow' and not waste effort, time, materials, information, equipment, or assets.

Lean when combined with Six Sigma's aggressive drive to consistently meet customer needs, reduce variation and promote process stabilisation, provides a powerful means by which organisations can improve.

Most individuals coming to Lean Six Sigma for the first time actually leave the training with a very changed and fresh perspective on ideas such as, what it means to be customer focused, how much waste occurs every day in organisations and how they can contribute to making the organisation successful.

Organisational Structure

What is the organisational structure used when deploying a Lean Six Sigma based improvement programme? Initiated by Motorola, who first developed and codified Six Sigma methodologies in the 1980s, and based on the martial arts, you will often find the term 'belts' being used.

Although Lean Six Sigma programmes are fine-tuned to the organisation, typically a number of belt types exist in any major deployment. The belts receive an appropriate level of training for the role they are expected to perform. Some examples of common belt 'levels' are given below:

- **White Belt** – One day training in the concepts involved with Lean Six Sigma. Will participate in problem solving or continuous improvement teams;
- **Yellow Belt** – Two days training in basic problem solving and facilitation skills. Will drive local problem solving initiatives and be an active participant in larger improvement projects;
- **Green Belt** – 10 days training in advanced problem solving and continuous improvement tools, as well as a selection of leadership and project management techniques. Will drive and lead longer term continuous improvement projects in their local area;

- Black Belt – 20 days training covering a wide array of practical, graphical, statistical and leadership tools used in Lean Six Sigma. These individuals are the most advanced improvement experts and change agents and are expected to drive difficult and challenging projects;
- Project Sponsor or Champion – Two days training that promotes management involvement in all stages of a continuous improvement project's lifecycle.

Project Methodology

Many project based methodologies and templates are associated with problem solving and continuous improvement. Lean Six Sigma teaches the scientific method, as well as a pragmatic and common sense approach to problem solving.

Trainees are taught the DMAIC methodology, helping them to understand that improvement projects should follow some important phases, namely:

- Define the problem or opportunity;
- Measure the current state; data is key;
- Analyse to understand root causes;
- Improve and address process issues; validate improvements;
- Control the process long term to maintain the gains.

Those who have been Lean Six Sigma trained are less likely to engage in short term fire fighting, will understand the importance of using objective data and will be in the best position to enact long term business solutions.

Philosophy and Motivation

Anyone associated with Lean Six Sigma, understands that engaged people are the most important asset to any organisation.

Lean Six Sigma is inclusive, promotes ownership of issues and encourages everyone to be involved at some level, whether as a team member, team leader or as a project sponsor. A focus on process can eventually be used throughout, encouraging people to solve problems, continually seek improvements and never to blame others for organisational shortfalls.

“Lean when combined with Six Sigma's aggressive drive to consistently meet customer needs, reduce variation and promote process stabilisation, provides a powerful means by which organisations can improve.”

In order to obtain the benefits of Lean Six Sigma, any institution embarking on the journey will need to train and coach its people well. Without adequate support, attempts at introducing a culture of continuous improvement, which Lean Six Sigma demands, will fall by the wayside.

Instead, the application of the 'correct tools for the job' and the 'engagement of the right people' to obtain your belt can help your organisation to start fighting and become the best in class.



Dr Andy Slaney
Principal Consultant and Lean Six Sigma
Master Black Belt

BSI

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“We had real problems in our service performance with high error rates and we could not understand why. Not only did Dembridge work with us to provide the solution, but they identified the root causes and improved the processes with controls in place to ensure sustainability. As a result, our sales have increased, our costs have decreased and our teams feel proud to be the best in our business.”

Richard

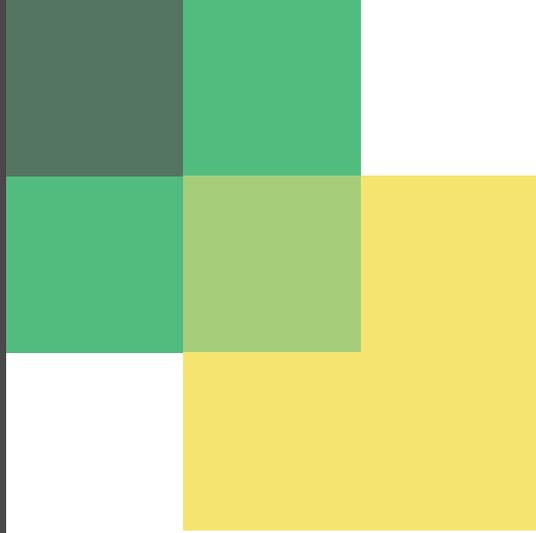
Operations Manager

“The trainer engaged all the trainees. He was perfectly happy to stop and provide extra information and examples and obviously has a wealth of knowledge that he uses very effectively to illustrate the points he is making.”

Maggie

Podiatry Manager

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