



Definitive Logic: Applying Lean Six Sigma to DoD Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics

Overview

Lean Six Sigma (LSS) has recently emerged as the methodology of choice for achieving business transformation within DoD. Although the roots of LSS lie within the commercial manufacturing world, for the past decade, more and more companies and now federal agencies are applying the methodology and its tools in a service environment. Within DoD, this includes application of LSS at policy levels, including within the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) community.

Definitive Logic has implemented LSS within the DoD AT&L community, resulting in solutions that range from process mapping and redesign, to training curriculum and organizational design change recommendations.

Strategy and Approach

Definitive Logic takes a pragmatic approach to implementing LSS. As with any methodology, we understand that much of LSS is a toolkit and that it is important to remain flexible when applying the LSS tools. This allows us to tailor our approach to each client and improvement project, ensuring that we are leveraging the best LSS tools to achieve a sustainable improvement. For example, we recognize that typical challenges in a services environment include:

Challenges	Definitive Logic's Solution
Limited time to attend training	We have an accelerated training program that allows us to train within one week
Budget & funding constraints	We provide Black Belt & Master Black Belt expertise at significantly lower cost than many competitors and at our size can manage projects more efficiently (for example, we can mentor with 15% of a Black Belt FTE per project rather than the commonly accepted 25% per project)
Lack of data	Particularly in early stage LSS initiatives, increased focus on surveys, Voice of Customer (VOC) interviews, and the "Process Door" counteract a lack of data

In our work with DoD, our practical LSS approach has really helped in several ways. First, when working at a policy level, sometimes baseline metrics can be difficult to come by. Our approach to addressing this is to focus heavily on the Voice of the Customer (VOC) interviews to obtain as much information as possible about baseline conditions, while at the same time conducting surveys to help quantify this baseline. Where possible, we roll our survey questions into existing surveys and data calls to ensure minimal inconvenience to DoD end users.



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In addition, we focus our analysis on the “Process Door” by reviewing carefully mapped as-is process diagrams and conducting value-added/non-value added analyses, as well as leveraging the Ishikawa (Fishbone) diagramming technique. We have found that this type of analysis yields excellent results, especially when you have a core group of subject matter experts (SMEs) in the room. An ancillary benefit is that the discussion typically engages the project team members and SMEs in a way that begins to lay the foundation for buy-in during the Improve phase.

We then use whatever data we obtain through surveys and data calls to supplement the process analysis and pinpoint any significant shifts from our team’s conclusions (or in many cases, to validate our conclusions). The data (and collection approach) then typically becomes the baseline for our control plan during the Control phase.

Results

In our recent LSS work within the DoD AT&L community, our approach yielded solutions that range from process mapping and redesign, to training curriculum and organizational design change recommendations. For example, from a process mapping perspective, we developed detailed (2 levels below SIPOC) as-is and to-be process maps that will be used in training and policy implementation guidance documents.

In addition, our team recognized that one of the key improvements OSD AT&L needed to make was better training of personnel in the subject policies and processes. Therefore, we identified key process roles, documented the training needs, benchmarked available training, and completed a gap analysis. From this gap analysis, we were able to put together a new training curriculum (by role) that would plug the gaps.

Finally, another improvement that we realized was critical to the success of the new process was availability of resources to execute the process. To ensure appropriate resource availability, we again completed a gap analysis by reviewing estimates of as-is resource levels and then determining what was necessary to successfully execute the new process. This analysis became the basis for a resource/funding request within DoD.

Summary

Although LSS started in the commercial, manufacturing world, it has many applications to the Government services environment. In recent years, this notion has taken hold and there have been many successes along the way. However, some are still not convinced due to failures and negative experiences caused by delays as companies attempt to follow the LSS lifecycle too rigidly.

At Definitive Logic, we believe in the power of flexibility – this does not mean skipping steps, but it does mean taking a pragmatic approach to ensure a viable and coherent experience for team members, and a lasting, process-based solution. **For more information about how Definitive Logic can support your Lean Six Sigma and broader Business Process Management needs, please contact Nick Incontrera at nick.incontrera@definitivelogic.com or (703) 599-6266.**