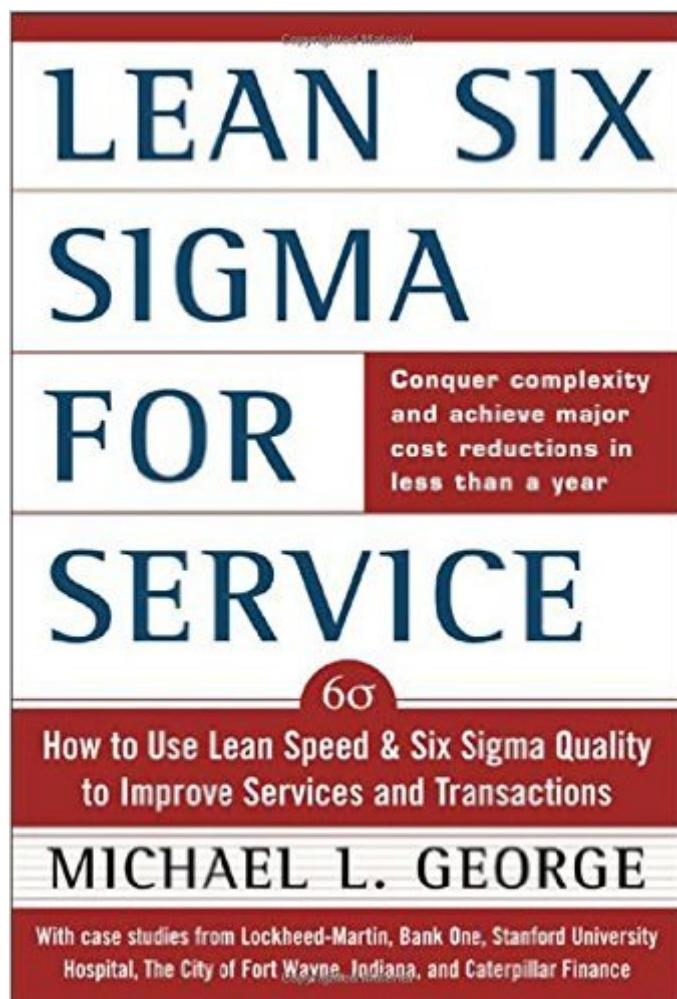


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# Lean Six Sigma For Service : How To Use Lean Speed And Six Sigma Quality To Improve Services And Transactions



## **Synopsis**

Bring the miracle of Lean Six Sigma improvement out of manufacturing and into services. Much of the U.S. economy is now based on services rather than manufacturing. Yet the majority of books on Six Sigma and Lean--today's major quality improvement initiatives--explain only how to implement these techniques in a manufacturing environment. *Lean Six Sigma for Services* fills the need for a service-based approach, explaining how companies of all types can cost-effectively translate manufacturing-oriented Lean Six Sigma tools into the service delivery process. Filled with case studies detailing dramatic service improvements in organizations from Lockheed Martin to Stanford University Hospital, this bottom-line book provides executives and managers with the knowledge they need to: Reduce service costs by 30 to 60 percent Improve service delivery time by 50 percent Expand capacity by 20 percent without adding staff

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Together with K.Yang's *Design for Six Sigma for Services*, George's book form a pair of well-meant, but utterly ineffective efforts to translate the six sigma know-how into applicable tools for designing and improving service products and processes. Both books suffer from exactly the same problem: a very strong manufacturing background, which refuses to stay out of the way, while the authors try to explain 6S concepts and techniques under a services business light. Examples after examples are

taken from pure manufacturing processes - the sort with names like "etching" and "plating". This is not a matter of bad didactics. It is not a question of learning through manufacturing examples and then easily applying the same concepts and techniques in the services environment. As both authors promptly address at their introductory "why this book" paragraphs, service processes are inherently different from manufacturing processes. Most of them do not even have any physical output. Their tasks or "repetitive units of work" have usually to be described in such high-level, generic ways that render them useless - think of the tasks of a senior associate in a large law firm. That is precisely why the services industry needs so badly a body of knowledge about quality management. George's and Yang's books, unfortunately fall far behind, on this task.

I have heard Six-Sigma discussed often, but truly thought it was something that applied to manufacturing only. Same with Lean: Kanban, Toyota, JIT. I am a manager in a professional services industry. So, outside of memorizing the theory for exams during B-School, I thought little more of Six-Sigma. Michael George has opened my eyes. He points out (in a non-technical way) both the differences in Lean and Six Sigma, and how they complement each other. He does this through some description of the Lean and Six-Sigma techniques, and follows up with some revealing case studies, how Lean and Six-Sigma tools can apply to services. Six-Sigma brings an awful lot to the table. Six-Sigma was the backbone of Jack Welch's eye-popping success at GE, shaving hundreds of millions off of the company's cost structure. A proscribed series of steps, Six-Sigma's customer focused methodology (DMAIC) allows the practitioner, generally referred to as Green or Black Belts, to rationally Define a problem, Measure it, Analyze the causes, make adjustments to Improve the problem, and ultimately Control the corrected process. In each of these steps, Six-Sigma deploys standard tools that help the practitioner ensure that processes are producing standardized outputs well within specs. The result, if implemented correctly, is higher quality output. Increased quality = less quality costs (scrap, customer returns) = increased margins. Lean is largely managing processes to increase the velocity of them. Increased velocity means less work in process (WIP). Lean means determining which activities are value added, and which are not. Then, you get rid of the bathwater and keep the baby.

The last time I checked, and its online partner Borders offer more than 600 different books on the subject of Six Sigma. Presumably hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on consulting services, training programs and materials, workshops, seminars, etc. in what continues to be a remarkably active area of business initiative. That said, it should be added that a substantial

percentage of Six Sigma or comparable process improvement initiatives fail, many within 60-90 days after launch. (Percentage estimates vary.) By now I have become convinced that the most valuable business books are written in response to especially important questions. For example, Jim Collins' two books: "How to build an organization that will last?" and "How can a good or even mediocre company become great?" Here is the question posed by Michael George: "How to conquer complexity and achieve major cost reductions by using Lean speed and Six Sigma quality to improve services and transactions?" In essence, Lean Six Sigma for services is a business improvement methodology that maximizes shareholder value by achieving the fastest possible rate of improvement in customer satisfaction, cost, quality, process speed, and invested capital. Presumably George agrees that it would be a fool's errand to read his book (or any other), then charge ahead with implementing all of the recommendations it makes. With all due respect to what can be learned from organizations such as Lockheed Martin, Bank One's National Enterprise Operations group, Stanford Hospital Clinics, the City of Fort Worth, and Caterpillar, Inc.

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