

# “Speaking Out”

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## Lean Six Sigma

### *Problem Solved!*

*By Robert D. Skillman*

We Black Belts are capable of coming up with solutions for which there are no known problems. That is just how good we are. I'm thinking of one case where our solution was just the right thing and there was a problem, yet unrecognized. You have all heard my argument that Six Sigma must be the ancestor of an effective Lean initiative. Many of the Lean methods are designed to increase velocity. In the absence of an impeccable process, all this accomplishes is the generation of defects at a much faster rate. Beginning with Six Sigma allows the practitioner the knowledge of knowing exactly if the process is ready to turn up the velocity. If not, the Six Sigma methods will make it ready.

### **Now for the problem:**

Lean grew out of a cobbling together of various methods that were successful at Toyota. These began to be organized and written about by Jim Womack. Lean, in western countries, became what Womack said it was. Here is the problem. There was never an organized rigor. I'm talking about an organized rigor that identifies the initiative, understands the value and generates a team to proceed. Once the team is chartered, there must be a structured step-by-step method on just how to proceed. I'm well aware of the many attempts to do just this, but most aren't very effective.

### **The Six Sigma community solved the problem:**

When it came to process improvements, Six Sigma brought the rigor. This is what was lacking with previous tactics. DMAIC was just the right thing at the right time. You do this, then you do that, you sustain the gains and then it is "Miller Time." By blending Lean into the Six Sigma rigor of DMAIC, the huge blindside in Lean has been effectively eliminated. Lean Six Sigma is best accomplished by using Lean tactics in the DMAIC rigor.

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