

People Development – The Smart Way

A Six Sigma Fairy Tale

By Dr. Uwe H. Kaufmann

A couple of years ago, I was meeting the President of an Asian multi-national mid-sized service company for a Six Sigma Training on Saipan, a nice sunny pacific island south-east of



Japan. Together with a colleague we were sitting at the beach, wearing swimming suits and preparing the next days session whilst getting sun-tanned. When the President arrived – he was in shorts and ugly slippers! - we had a casual briefing for the Leadership Team session and the Staff Awareness Sessions we were about to run during that week.

One of the first questions I normally ask before starting the engagement with a new client is always about the “Why”. His answer was very surprising: “We need a robust and systematic tool to select and train future lead-

ers for our company. Personally I don’t know that much about Six Sigma, but what I’ve read so far was about focusing on customer requirements, managing and improving processes, changing the company’s culture, encouraging people and, last but not least, making money. This is exactly the job of our leaders.”

Impressive!

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The President said.

The introductory sessions on Saipan for about 60 middle-managers and above went very well, followed by a four times one week Black Belt training involving only a small number of High Potentials focussing on improving their processes in the company’s business locations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. It was really a pleasure to work with these highly-motivated and focussed Black Belts. Even during the training they were able to show some very promising analysis results leading to major changes in their most important core process, the sales process. Working with them was enjoyable and some of them became friends of mine.

Since I moved on in my career, I lost sight of them for a couple of years.

Back to Hong Kong some month ago, I was talking to one of these friends. Cindy used to lead a group of sales agents in Hong Kong when I met her first. Having spent some time with her going through the typical ups and downs of a Black Belt experience, I know that she is definitely a rising star at the company’s heaven.

The question was still, could she deliver? “Yes, after my first project which made a significant amount of money for us, I did another one, successful as well. Surprisingly, I was able to run my sales team at the same time. In addition, I trained more Black Belts and Green Belts internally because I experienced the power of this methodology myself. And – guess what – I am heading the Hong Kong operations now.”

So, the president kept his promise. He made her a Vice President.

About the Author

Dr Uwe H. Kaufmann is the Singapore-based Managing Director of Centre for Organisational Effectiveness Pte Ltd, a business advisory company focussing on the Asian Market. He has extensive experience in implementing process and organisation improvements for various industries. He specialises in Six Sigma and Quality Improvements as well as Strategy Implementation. He received his Six Sigma Master Black Belt qualification with GE Capital. Uwe is a German national and can be reached at Uwe.Kaufmann@COE-Partners.com.