



review

Six Sigma: Motorola does it right
by Richard Lowell

➤ **Six Sigma® Foundations**, online, 2-4 hrs, 2003, Motorola University (800-446-6744, www.motorola.com/mu), \$245 per student; volume discounts available.

Computer-based training (CBT), web-based training (WBT), e-learning—the names and acronyms are numerous. To some educators the reality all those names refer to is the bane of learning. To others, it is the “next big thing” on the way to maturity.

Whatever your view, it is here to stay. CBT has been found useful for many knowledge-based learning applications, and Motorola has developed an excellent model for how to use e-learning effectively.

Six Sigma was originally designed to identify and prevent defects in a manufacturing process. As a methodology, it's an analytical, statistical approach that has provided substantial benefits to organizations that have embraced it.

Motorola created Six Sigma, as we know it today. Motorola University has long been the corporate equivalent of Harvard or MIT. It is highly respected in the field of corporate universities, offering leading-edge thinking as it relates to Motorola's goals and some of the best faculty in the country. When the creators of the leading methodology for business process improvement try their hand at an e-learning foundation course, you would expect a finely crafted, reliable training course that achieves its goal. Six Sigma Foundations does not disappoint.

Crafted as a program for internal use, Motorola's Foundation course transfers easily to an external for-sale workshop. As an introduction to the concepts of Six Sigma, I have found nothing better in either cyberspace or other media.

The workshop takes you through the basics of the Six Sigma methodology in a concise and easy-to-understand format. The principles of leadership are explained in practical terms easily translated back to the workplace. Six Sigma analytical tools are demystified so everyone can use them. It is to the great credit of the course designers that you start looking to use the tools and apply the principles as soon as you finish the workshop to your own ongoing projects.

Excellent overview

Of note, Six Sigma Foundations provides an excellent overview of the “new” Six Sigma leadership principles. The four principles provide substance and direction to the new workplace:

- **Align** requires all improvement projects to be directly linked to an organization's strategic goals.
- **Mobilize** requires that teams be provided with the focus they need to complete their projects and positively affect the organization's objectives.
- **Accelerate** involves focusing on the “rapid” part of “rapid business results.” Shorter deadlines and rigorous reviews are combined with action learning methodology to quickly provide results.
- **Govern** reminds management that more is required of them than simply selecting improvement opportunities and assigning a team.

Each principle invokes a specific action within a Six Sigma organization whose foundation is urgency.

Screen design is elegantly simple with easily understood text and well-designed graphics. Voice narration is well paced, with excellent modulation and crisp diction. The color scheme is pleasing to the eye and well matched to avoid garish contrasts that would distract the eye from the topic at hand (which you would expect from an organization known for eliminating variability or defects from business processes).



No fancy bells and whistles detract from the learning objectives. The course is interactive without being messy or overburdened. Well-spaced mini quizzes check for student understanding, rewarding with praise and providing repetition of your correct answer to “sink” each learning objective. Wrong answers are provided with the correct answer. “Talking” text boxes provide building block information that supplements the learning object of a particular topic. Navigation graphics and control buttons are easily understood.

Six Sigma Foundations is easy on bandwidth, running smoothly in Microsoft Windows 98-Internet Explorer 6.0 over a dialup connection (56K). Windows XP with a DSL connection is so smooth that you hardly notice downloading.



Recommendation

If you're interested in a foundation course on a structured methodology for enhancing business processes, this online workshop is for you. Any organization can benefit from applying

the tools and techniques of Six Sigma either in full or as part of a toolkit of managerial applications. The leadership principles by themselves are worth signing up for. They are the wave of the global economic future.

Six Sigma Foundations product rating

Holds user interest	★★★★1/2
Production quality	★★★★
Interactivity	★★★★1/2
Value of content	★★★★
Instructional value	★★★★
Value for the money	★★★★
Overall rating	★★★★

Richard Lowell is the principal of Pacific Performance Technologies, a global supplier of professional performance, reliability, maintenance, coaching and training services to fortune 1000 process industries worldwide. He can be reached at 281.361.4489 or rwlowell@att.net.

Unbiased reviews

Training Media Review is a privately-held company dedicated to serving anyone with training responsibilities. All of our reviewers are independent training professionals. TMR does not charge vendors for reviews or accept subsidies from them. We work hard to prevent “grade inflation” in our product ratings. Our reviewers cannot have consulting relationships with the vendors of products they review. Because of its objectivity, TMR is the sole supplier of media reviews to T+D magazine, published by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD).

Outstanding	★★★★★	Above average	★★★★1/2	Poor	★
Very good	★★★★1/2	Average	★★★	NA	Not applicable
Good	★★★	Below Average	★★1/2	NR	Not rated (usually not enough information)