

# September 2005, Six Sigma and Leadership

A recent survey completed by more than 1300 global business professionals whose companies are using Six Sigma shows that corporate leadership programs involving Six Sigma training were six times (only a coincidence to be sure) more likely to be called "highly successful" than those without. In the survey, to be released in the September/October issue of iSixSigma Magazine, the longer companies have been using Six Sigma, the more likely they are to require related experience among their managers.

"The results were even more dramatic than we anticipated," commented Michael Cyger, the magazine's CEO and publisher. "About 85% of people who said their leadership programs were highly successful indicated that Six Sigma was a key component of that training. In sharp contrast only 3% of the highly unsuccessful programs involved Six Sigma."

The link between Six Sigma experience and leadership development was obvious in other parts of the survey. "About 60% of the respondents said that people in their companies who have completed a Six Sigma 'tour of duty' are moved into new leadership positions," said Cyger. "That's compared to only 14% who returned to their original jobs."

Cyger said these patterns aren't very surprising once you consider the kind of skills that Six Sigma training builds. "We all want to work for leaders who make good decisions based on data not emotions, who share responsibility, who know how to generate results," Cyger said. "We want leaders who are enthusiastic and passionate about what they're doing. Those are exactly the skills and qualities that make Six Sigma professionals most successful and that Six Sigma helps build in future leaders."

In fact, noted Cyger, previous research by iSixSigma Magazine showed that Black Belts (staff who receive extensive Six Sigma training and lead projects) generate almost \$200,000 of hard financial benefit per project. He added, "If you're looking for people to promote into leadership positions, what better track record could someone have?"