

The Power of Six Sigma

Subir Chowdhury. Dearborn, \$17.95 (128p) ISBN 0-7931-4434-5

Using a format similar to that in Spenser Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese?*, Chowdhury (Management 21C) has created a fictional story that exemplifies the benefits of the business philosophy called Six Sigma. In Chowdhury's rendering, Joe, a middle-aged manager unexpectedly laid off from his position at a fast-food franchise company, is depressed and uncertain about his next move. He calls Larry, an old friend and former co-worker whose career is thriving. Over lunch, Larry explains how he has practiced Six Sigma, both to advance his career and to increase profits for his employer, and he teaches the program's basics to an initially skeptical, then wildly enthusiastic Joe. At the crux of this strategic program, advanced by GE's Jack Welch and instituted at many other major corporations, is a renewed focus on eliminating mistakes, waste and rework. Six Sigma is based on designated teams ("people power") that focus solely on solving a specific problem ("process power"), which may lead to efficiencies that please consumers and, by saving the company money, enhance the bottom line. What distinguishes Six Sigma from other popular quality management techniques, such as Total Quality Management and ISO9000, is that each team has a clear goal; moreover, employees benefit because companies usually tie a financial incentive to a team's goal. While Chowdhury's is not the first book about Six Sigma, what makes his stand out is its engaging and simple approach intended for a broad audience, from the assembly line worker to middle managers and CEOs of smaller companies. (Apr.)

Forecast: Given the attention paid to Six Sigma, and Dearborn's ambitious first printing, this book has a reasonable chance of hitting business bestseller lists if Dearborn can jump-start word-of-mouth and find ways to encourage managers to make the book required reading for employees.
