Improving an Assembly Process in a Manufacturing Company using Six Sigma Methodologies

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Abstract: As the world market is always evolving it requires continuous improvement of the quality and environment management, which therefore is in turn able to satisfy the needs and expectations of all parties (customers, staff and other stakeholders) and also helps in maintaining competitive advantage in the market. In this paper, I present a solution for improving an assembly process in a Manufacturing Company in India with the help Six Sigma Process using DMAIC Methodology.

Index Terms-- Six Sigma; DMAIC; Xbar & R charts; PARETO; Ishikawa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Having the desire to achieve business excellence in the Industry, numerous companies have embraced Six Sigma projects for improving competitiveness and to promote efficient production. Six Sigma is a structured approach to problem solving that entails placing emphasis on improving or optimizing existing products or processes (Chowdhury, 2003; He & Goh, 2015; Montgomery & Woodall, 2008).

Usually, for a Manufacturing Company, the primary objective is to conduct mainly along the following lines: improve the quality, steady decrease in costs, better customer service and to optimize resource consumption and better waste management. Each Six Sigma project which is carried out within an organization functions along a defined sequence of steps and has specific value targets. In this context Pyzdek and Keller (2010) considered that Six Sigma methodology is the best way for improving quality / reducing waste by helping organizations produce products and services better, faster, and cheaper.

I present a case study to demonstrate how the DMAIC framework is used to improve assembly line process in a Manufacturing Industry. Six Sigma can be further classified into two approaches: DMAIC (D-Define, M-Measure, A-Analyze, I-Improve, C-Control), which is applied to an existing product or process to be improved, and DMADV (D-Define, M-Measure, A-Analyze, D-Design, V-Verify) which is used to develop new products or processes.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF DMAIC

When applied for performance improvement of an existing product, process, or service, the Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control, or DMAIC model is used. The product is manufactured for a ship building client requiring 1250 scroll turbo parts from the Flash Forge LTD.

A. Define Phase

The first step in the Define Phase was to develop a Project Charter. The official plan and authorization for the project is condensed in the Six Sigma Project Charter. The charter was used to determine the respective roles and responsibilities of each member within the design team as well as the objective of the project. Sufficiently defined customer requirements translating into engineering requirements are created in the define phase. On the production line, for this product, are performed the following operations:

1. Forming
2. Pressing
3. Spinning
4. Bending
5. Welding
6. Post Weld Heat Treatment
7. Assembly and Painting

A Pareto analysis was performed on 1,250 semi-finished products from which 101 were defective, revealing that incorrect height of therivet (30 defects) as the major defect (Fig. 1.) which was calculated using the CMM machine.
B. Measure Phase

The team decided to concentrate improvement efforts on the bending process which caused the highest number of defects in the manufacturing process. This process is done manually by inserting the upper plate in a holding device than applying a force using a special hand operated tool. The characteristic Critical to Quality (CTQ) is measured as height $H_1$ is very critical for the next operation in the final assembly of the finished product. According to the technical drawing drawn according to the customer requirements by our engineers, the height (assembled) dimension is 150.3 ± 0.041 mm. It has been decided to measure 10 samples of 5 finished products each, during a 10 hour shift.

After performing tests to detect the random character of the sample data, tests to detect and remove outliers, have been assessed to confirm whether the data obtained through measurement came from a normal distribution (Table 1) and also were assessed indicators of process capability (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3. Process Capability chart](image)

To verify if the process is under control or not, the 50 measurements were projected on an Xbar & R charts, and we can see that regarding R chart the process was under control (Fig. 5.) but regarding the Xbar chart the process was not in control (Fig. 6.).

![Fig. 4. R Chart](image)

One can see that there are not only points which exceed the control limits, but also there is a clear tendency of increasing the rivet height as the time passes, definitely showing that there is a systematic problem which causes this situation. For $C_{pk} = 0.88$ resulting in Sigma Level short-term ≈ 2.9 respectively Sigma Level long-term ≈ 1.4.

![Fig. 5. R Chart](image)

A. After Measure Phase the following conclusions were drawn:

- Amplitude values are within control limits and therefore riveting process is stable as precision.
- Average values exceed control limits and therefore riveting process is unstable as adjustment (usually, adjustment instability may have as sources, failure to periodically check machine-tools, tool wear, improper machine adjustment to work dimension and inhomogeneous semi-finished products).
- There is an abnormality in the riveting process meaning there is a constant tendency of
displacement to increasingly higher values of rivet height.

- The riveting process is not capable on short and long term.

C. Analyze Phase

In the Analyze phase, after taking into account the conclusions drawn from Measure Phase it was decided to address the following issues:

- Constant displacement of rivet height to increasingly higher values must be thoroughly analyzed.
- The riveting process should be more in control.
- Riveting process capability must be substantially improved in long term.

In the first step, to analyze these issues, the team decided to utilize an Ishikawa diagram has been utilized. Ishikawa diagram or "Cause - Effect" diagram is a tool for analyzing and plotting the relationship between a given effect and its possible causes. We performed this analysis in conjunction with a “5 Whys – RCFA” analysis and it was determined that the root cause off rivet height noncompliance is the use of improper riveting force during work deployment due to the operator’s fatigue, as the ten-hour shift takes place (Fig. 7).

![Fig. 6. Ishikawa Diagram](image)

In the analyze phase it was determined that at the beginning of the ten-hour shift the operator’s tendency is to apply a greater down force than needed and as the time deploys the down force diminishes due to operator fatigue, which explains the tendency of increasingly higher values of rivet height. Also a FMEA analysis was performed. It has been determined (Fig. 8.) that the function affected was the contact between the turbo scroll assembly and the rest of car electrical system. The potential failure mode was detected as the inadequate riveting force using the Ishikawa analysis.

By taking into account the severity, occurrence and detection, a RPN of 105 was calculated. The recommendation by Six Sigma FMEA team was to install a device to properly control the riveting force. Also it has been recommended that the riveting hand-tool design to be improved, even if the necessary down force is not high. The team decided to tackle this issue regarding the lack of semi-finished products inconsistency generating 30.29% of total defects and it was decided to use AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) to choose from 5 different suppliers of sensors based on some important criteria.

D. Improve Phase

Based on the recommendations from Analyze Phase, there were implemented the following changes:

- The tool design was improved allowing to be handled smoothly.
- An acoustic measuring device was installed.
- A supplier of cables was selected using AHP.

![Fig. 7. FMEA Template](image)

To improve the riveting process it has been decided to use an acoustic measuring device with warning. When the operator applies the down force, the limiter gives visual and acoustic signals when the necessary force has been reached, meaning that the proper rivet height is attained.
There were selected 5 potential sensor suppliers (denoted from A to E), using 6 decision criteria, namely Experience (EXP), Financial Stability (FS), Quality Performance (QP), Human Resources (HR), Technological Resources (TR) and Current Workload (CW). Priorities matrix, Criteria weights and Priority vector for the 5 Potential sensor suppliers are presented in Table 2. Therefore, according to Priority vector, supplier B was chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EXP (0.18)</th>
<th>FS (0.12)</th>
<th>QP (0.30)</th>
<th>HR (0.27)</th>
<th>TR (0.08)</th>
<th>CW (0.08)</th>
<th>Priority vector</th>
</tr>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.34</td>
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<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.401</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.160</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.226</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.150</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**E. Control Phase**

In control phase the improvements presented in Improve Phase were performed, there were measured 10 samples of 5 semi-finished products each, during a 10 hour shift. These tests were performed to detect the random character of the sample data, and also used to assess whether the data obtained through measurement came from a normal distribution and also were assessed indicators of process capability (Fig. 9.). To assess if the improved process is in control or not, the 50 measurements were plotted on an Xbar & R charts, revealing that regarding both Xbar & R charts the process was in control (Fig. 10 and Fig. 11.). For Cpk= 1.78 resulting in SigmaLevel short-term ≈ 5.2 respectively Sigma Level long-term ≈ 3.8.

After the implementation of the recommended action by Six Sigma FMEA was to install a device that can properly control the riveting force, the updated FMEA is presented in figure 11, showing a much lower RPN of 14.

**III. CONCLUSION**

As we all know the revenue and growth of a company depends on how efficiently they launch new product. Therefore, by the application of Six Sigma Methodology using DMAIC to the riveting process the results were obtained: the tool design was improved allowing to be handled smoothly, an acoustic measuring device was installed signaling visually when the necessary down
force was attained, the riveting process was brought in-control, the process capability was substantially improved on short and long term, Cpk increased from 0.88 to 1.78, Sigma Level short-term increased from 2.8 to 5.2, Sigma Level long-term increased from 1.4 to 3.8. To ensure the effectiveness of a Six Sigma project, the commitment of managers in investing resources to support the program is essential.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Ashish Kumar Atri has completed B.tech Mechanical engineering from Vellore Institute of Technology. His research interests are Operations research, Supply Chain Management and Industrial Engineering.