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FM TECH PROCUREMENT

LEAN TECH

Using Lean Six Sigma leads to better decisions when procuring and implementing FM tech, says ***Kiran Kachela***

Procuring and implementing new technology can go wrong because of these common pitfalls:

- **Underestimating the pace of technology change.** There can be pressure to invest money to keep up with competitors, and a failure to assess the technological context and environment.
- **Belief in systems alone.** A new system is never the sole answer to all problems; humans coexist with automation and still have a role working alongside smart systems.
- **Legacy mindsets.** Failure to consider the efficiency and scalability of new technology and ways to address the resistance people may have to the changes.

Lean to the rescue

Lean Six Sigma's blueprint DMAIC framework helps organisations to reap the rewards of their technology investments.

- **D is for Define** Ask key questions to understand the problem your technology project aims to solve. Not doing this can result in misaligned systems and heavy investment in bespoke configuration as a workaround.

Next, understand what your customers want. The 'Voice of the Customer' tools help to capture and analyse what customers deem valuable. These set the foundational requirements to enable the tender process to begin.

No project should proceed without an understanding of the wider context of the change. The SIPOC tool is effective for understanding all suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs and customers of a project. This is useful when assessing the pace of change and interdependencies.

- **M is for Measure** Defining key measures of success helps to validate procurement decisions and manage suppliers once new technologies have been implemented. Sales people boast about how great their systems are; organisations should assess whether the systems meet expectations and challenge suppliers for any shortfalls.

Lean Six Sigma provides a system to measure data that adds value and focuses on what is important to customers. Measurement data also provides insights into the adoption rate of the new technology.

- **A is for Analyse** Understanding the causes of the procurement problem – people, leadership and culture – can increase the chances of a successful technology project.

Methods such as the Fishbone Analysis and Value Stream Mapping identify and measure the impact of root causes. This allows for data-driven decision-making to allocate resources and to optimise process flows. Working through these methods as a team brings in different perspectives, which helps to shift mindsets to recognise how best to manage change.

- **I is for Improve** With the problem defined, success measures identified and root causes analysed, it's time to develop a solution. Selecting, procuring and configuring systems is followed by implementing necessary processes to achieve desired outcomes.

Process design is critical, particularly in FM with its many variables. The Poke Yoke technique helps you to design your workflows to prevent errors, thus providing optimum quality control.

Lean Six Sigma aims to add more value for the customer with fewer resources and eliminate waste (anything that doesn't add value) such as waiting for systems to load, or having unnecessary button clicks and fields to fill in. Lean can streamline and enhance the user experience. There are real rewards in the elimination of waste, continual re-evaluation of processes and understanding the customer's voice.

- **C is for Control** This phase seeks to achieve a repeatable, consistent approach to systems so they remain sustainable. The tools in this phase help to build control mechanisms that provide early detection of non-compliance and ensure that benefits are sustained.

Lean Six Sigma is more than a problem-solving methodology; it's a philosophy of continual improvement. Embedding this strong culture is key to a successful technology project. Integrating Lean Six Sigma principles into a system procurement and implementation allows businesses to reap the benefits of automation and a huge return on investment.

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