Six Sigma* on Continuous Processes: How and Why It Differs

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Abstract

The attention and need for management and reduction of variation has made improvement initiatives, such as *Six Sigma* approaches, attractive to many organizations. Idealistically, Six Sigma initiatives are focused on investigating the causes of variability and developing processes and products with less variation in output performance. This idealistic philosophy of Six Sigma suggests applicability of Six Sigma methodologies to all types of manufacturing (and non-manufacturing) processes – batch, continuous, and discrete. While the objective and expected outcomes of Six Sigma remain the same across industry or process types, there are characteristics of continuous processes and their organizations that suggest appropriate changes in the implementation and application of Six Sigma methods. The characteristics unique to continuous processes are discussed in terms of their influence on applicability of concepts and tools, deployment strategies and project direction and scope.