



A Guide to the "Must Have" Management Philosophy for 2007

You've embraced the philosophy of **TQM**, you've reshaped the organisation using **Business Process Re-engineering**, you've trained your best people as **Six Sigma** black belts and you've made the organisation **Lean**. You're even made use of every improvement technique from Japan. What next?

When reading this introduction you may be genuinely interested in what's next but it is equally likely that you fit into one of the following groups:

Group 1 You may be dreading what's next, mainly because what's next seems remarkably like what went before, and you're expected to believe passionately in the new philosophy

Group 2 You treat these new management fads with the cynicism they deserve, after all, if they really transformed organisations into highly profitable businesses then consultants would be running these companies rather than letting you into the secret. Or maybe the consultancy fees are greater than any profits they could generate! (This could give some credibility to a good definition of a consultant – Someone who sees something working in practice and wonders whether it will work in theory)

Group 3 You are wondering - what is Six Sigma?

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So does it matter what the next new management philosophy is?

Yes it does, but don't be surprised to find that at least 90% of each new thinking is based upon tried and tested approaches, but with new badges. However, the *badging* of the latest management philosophies shows signs that gurus are losing their inventive touch; the latest combination of Six Sigma with Lean thinking to become Lean Six Sigma is a case in point.

So before you start looking for a new panacea for your business in the new year make sure you:

- ◆ **Optimise** the opportunities from the initiatives you have already introduced. If you have not then this is likely to be either because the approach was not a good fit with your organisation, or it was poorly implemented. Adopting another philosophy may not be the solution
- ◆ **Integrate** the philosophy within the everyday activities of the business. Too many initiatives are given separate status and typically fail within 18–24 months.
- ◆ **Involve** everyone in your adoption of the latest management thinking; many of these management philosophies tend not to percolate down to junior managers, which not only nullifies the effect but can also build up resistance amongst the workforce

A healthy degree of cynicism may be useful but ignorance is dangerous

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management skills for a changing world

- ◆ **Educate** yourself and your team in all the latest management thinking; some elements will be applicable to your organisation and education will open up the people potential of your business. You are excused if you have a healthy degree of cynicism, but sheer ignorance is dangerous

Top Tips for 2007

Processes

Identify which business processes have the greatest opportunity for improving organisational performance and then set about improving them. Don't try to do it all at once, use an approach which makes best use of your resources (remember Pareto!) and is capable of being repeated over time; process improvement is not just a one-off exercise. As one chief executive was reported to say, "If we have got enough people to chase every improvement opportunity we're probably employing too many people".

People

Make sure that your people have the skills to do their job effectively and in doing so improve business performance. Far too many managers do not know how to manage, or auditors how to audit, or staff how to solve problems (so they don't arise again), etc

Customers

If you haven't already done so introduce a structured approach to finding out what your customers value about your business, and make sure you tell your employees about the positive feedback and not just the complaints you receive. After all, your customers must have more good things to say about you than bad or they wouldn't be doing business with you. If you do it right you will motivate the workforce, and it will remind your customers of why they do business with you.

"If we have got enough people to chase every improvement opportunity we're probably employing too many people"

And

If you were expecting me to come up with a brand new management fad for 2007 then I am sorry to disappoint you. I had thought of **Lean2** as a snappy title but this met with hoots of derision in the office. A stupid idea, using the name of a shed as a management philosophy; but remember if this does catch on, you heard it here first!

2007 – keep abreast of the latest management thinking, and implement the elements you feel most comfortable with.

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