Nowadays, companies have to strive for excellence if they hope to survive in the long run. Beating the competition is the most important prerequisite in order to make it through today’s difficult market situation.

There are plenty of models that help you achieve excellence. In this workshop we will shed light on some of them.

Out of the US have been coming lots of success-stories about Six Sigma. The name sounds somewhat mysterious, but Six Sigma provides a uniform system aimed at reducing mistakes to an absolute minimum. For that purpose a strong methodology is used, known as DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control). Companies such as Motorola and General Electric have spread Six Sigma around the globe.

However, the success is mostly due to the fact that Six Sigma demands that one sets clear financial objectives. On the other hand, Six Sigma demands the creation of new roles within the company, people whose main assignment is to keep Six Sigma alive. These people are called Black Belts, Green Belts and Yellow Belts.
Others seek refuge in the principles of **Lean Manufacturing** to reach the highest levels of excellence. The Toyota Production system, which is 50 years old, has become legendary and was the basis of Lean Manufacturing. “Lean” is a structured way of eliminating losses. It is a system that deletes all unnecessary activities, which must lead to a leaner production.

 Lean Thinking

- **Lean Thinking is a philosophy not a system or a technique. It is about simplicity, flow, visibility, partnership and value.**
- **Lean thinking rests on five key principles:**
  - Specify **Value** from the point of view of the customer.
  - Identify the **Value Stream**.
  - Make **Value Flow**.
  - **Pull** at the customer’s rate of demand.
  - Seek **Perfection** through continual improvement.

Managers worldwide are debating whether they should apply Six Sigma or Lean. And now, the Japanese are making the discussion even more complex with the introduction of yet another new methodology: the so-called “20 keys”.

20 keys is an often used name for ‘The Practical Programme of Revolution in Factories’ (in short ‘PPORF’). The 20 keys introduce the 20 areas in which a company has to improve in order to achieve shorter cycle times, better quality and lower cost.

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The system of the 20 keys essentially boils down to this:
- Each key is related to either Q (better quality), C (lower cost) or D (delivery/cycle time);
- Each key is scored from 1 (amateur) to 5 (best in class);
- For each key a ‘visual representation’ can be used in order to determine the right score – checklists can be used later on.

An important aspect of the 20 keys is the synergetic effect between these different keys. A structure which is based on 20 pillars does not guarantee stability if one of the pillars is weak. The organisation can only achieve her objectives if the support is equally divided over the 20 pillars. And this is exactly what this methodology emphasizes, helping companies reach higher objectives than the competition. The 20 keys are balanced in such a manner that the efforts done for one key will have their effect on several other keys. That is why one does not have to start with all 20 keys at the same time in order to achieve some results.

The program is made up in order to:
- Realise the strategic objectives in an effective manner
- Increase the learning capacity of the company
- Eliminate all forms of waste
- Motivate the employees to strive for continuous improvement
- To stay ahead of the competition in a fast changing world, profitably and with a long-term perspective.
As the 20 keys are based on the Toyota Production System, the keys are pretty well recognisable and the objectives are strongly aimed at increasing competitiveness and productivity and lowering costs. So, what is so new about this system?

What stands out most is the logic of the system in employing the different keys; a logic which makes it possible to unite all improvement initiatives within a company. Furthermore, Kobayashi has clearly succeeded in making everything very simple and transparent, which cannot be said of other excellence-models. This is what makes the 20 keys a method that can mobilize every single employee in a company.

20 keys to workplace improvement

![20 Keys Relations Diagram]

The keys 1 (cleaning and organizing), 2 (rationalizing the system/management of objectives), 3 (improvement team activities) and 20 (leading technology/site technology) are the cornerstones of the 20 keys system:
- Key 1: indeed, everything begins with order and tidiness;
- Key 2: setting goals and making sure that everyone in the company understands what his responsibilities are in reaching these objectives;
- Key 3: creating a culture where team activities are essential in achieving breakthrough improvements
- Key 20: a lot depends on the speed with which a company is capable of successfully implementing new technologies.
It’s no coincidence that these 4 keys are linked to the three basic drivers of production excellence: Quality, Cost and Delivery (QCD). Other keys that refer more directly to these drivers are:
- Quality: Key 11 (quality assurance system);
- Cost: Key 6 (manufacturing value analysis) and key 19 (conserving energy and materials)
- Delivery: Key 4 (reducing inventory).

This workshop offers an in-depth comparison of the three systems. Another important question: Is it better to commit to one system or is it better to choose the best elements from each method and create a good mix?

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