



*Guaranteed Project Success*

## **Selecting Effective Team Leaders for your Process Improvement Projects**

By MICHAEL REAMES AND GABRIEL KEMENY

While there are many Critical Success Factors in implementing a successful Lean Six Sigma program, organizations may end up spinning their wheels by failing to consider carefully who should lead their process improvement efforts. In ProcessGPS' experience, clients will sometimes populate a Black Belt training class with

- An individual who is between jobs
- An outstanding analytical person with no project management experience
- A “problem” employee – one who doesn't fit well in his current position
- A highly motivated individual who has very limited ability to interpret data

This suggests that there are – or should be – certain skills or characteristics that increase the likelihood of success in selecting a team leader. Many of our clients have created customized lists of criteria; others don't know which way to proceed and ask for guidance in selecting their team leaders. In extraordinary cases, an enlightened leadership may recognize that there are no employees with the requisite skills; so they choose to select external candidates. This makes it even more imperative to know what skills the organization desires in a prospective team leader.

The stakes are too high, the investment too dear to pick ineffective team leaders. A well-trained and high-performing Black Belt is worth \$1 Million or more on an annual basis. The moral:

- *Pick your team leaders wisely!*
- *Support them and reward them for their efforts!*
- *Nurture them and provide them the resources they need to get the job done!*

ProcessGPS has created the following set of skills and characteristics that greatly enhances the likelihood of selecting a BB candidate with the background to make him or her successful in

Process Improvement. We base this list on 20+ years of experience in helping organizations to implement their programs effectively.

## Project Leader (Black Belt)

### Suggested Selection Criteria

Desired Skill	Description
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior demonstrated leadership (formal or informal)</li> <li>• Respected by peers, superiors and subordinates</li> <li>• High potential leader (promotional candidate)</li> </ul>
<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated to analyze a situation factually rather than intuitively</li> <li>• Some facility with math concepts</li> <li>• Proficiency in Excel, Word, PowerPoint, MS Project, and Visio</li> <li>• Process orientation</li> <li>• Prior knowledge of Process Improvement (helpful, not required)</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitation, Meeting Management and Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness &amp; ability to transfer knowledge (teaching ability)</li> <li>• Ability to prepare and follow meeting agenda and to ensure follow-up on assigned action plans</li> <li>• Ability to handle multiple aspects of the project simultaneously</li> <li>• Teamwork oriented (not an individualist); participatory</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening skills</li> <li>• Oral and written skills</li> <li>• Demonstrated presentation skills; ability to talk to large &amp; small groups and diverse audiences engagingly and persuasively</li> </ul>
<b>Change Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good interaction skills; works well with others</li> <li>• Act as a change agent</li> </ul>
<b>Project Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to create a project plan and stay on schedule</li> <li>• Ability to multi-task</li> <li>• Results-oriented</li> <li>• Ability to make timely adjustments to keep a project on track</li> <li>• Project management certification a plus, but not required</li> </ul>
<b>Personal / Motivational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thirst for knowledge / Lifelong learner</li> <li>• Motivational ability: Ability to motivate self and team members</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation &amp; Creativity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges the status quo; open to new ideas</li> <li>• Out-of-the-box thinker; seeks innovative solutions</li> <li>• Comfortable with doing things differently</li> <li>• Positive attitude about using a new approach and integrating it into “the way we do business”</li> </ul>
<b>Business Insight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the industry &amp; competition (helpful, not required)</li> <li>• Some cross-functional experience</li> </ul>



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