



Microsoft Accelerates Six Sigma

*Point-and-click your way
to Six Sigma success.*

by Thomas Pyzdek

Microsoft feels your pain. Well, maybe not all of your pain—but at least the pain that software can help alleviate. Specifically, the company feels the pain you experience with information management as you deploy Six Sigma in your enterprise. And better yet, Microsoft wants to help, for free (sort of).

Although it's often said that Six Sigma doesn't add anything new to the TQM/SPC toolkit, one sizeable exception is the intense use of computer technology to speed up and simplify analysis of complex problems. Six Sigma organizations now have access to a new tool in the Six Sigma software toolkit: the Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma, which provides added functionality designed specifically for Six Sigma organizations and even maps to Six Sigma's five DMAIC phases—define, measure, analyze, improve and control. The Accelerator enables companies to better utilize existing Microsoft products such as Microsoft Office, Project and Visio—as well as third-party products to keep track of Six Sigma projects—track the financial results from those projects, manage resources while working on Six Sigma and other projects, and report results and project status. The Accelerator also assists with e-learning through the Microsoft Enterprise Learning Library v. 2. MELL provides powerful, in-depth software training and reference materials on Microsoft products and technologies. The Accelerator is free and will be available via download in May. The catch: You'll need to purchase the software that the Accelerator accelerates.

Microsoft makes a distinction between Accelerators and solutions. Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma's role is, logically

enough, to accelerate the process of creating a complete Six Sigma solution using various applications. In fact, the product might be better named "Microsoft Solution Accelerator for Six Sigma" or "Microsoft Six Sigma Solution Accelerator." The complete solution requires added effort from what Microsoft calls its "Microsoft Partners." These partners include Microsoft Project partners, who use Microsoft Project to create the project plans that form the basis of the Accelerator; Six Sigma consultants, who integrate the Accelerator into their client offerings; and vertical industry partners, who develop new Accelerator solutions. In a sense, if you develop your own Accelerator solution, you're also a partner.

According to Ingo Heel, senior product manager of Microsoft's Information Worker Enterprise Solutions Group, there are five pillars to a complete Six Sigma solution: business scorecard management, enterprise project management, Six Sigma tools management, knowledge management and e-learning.

Business scorecard management

Six Sigma personnel don't operate in a vacuum. To make change happen, Black Belts, Green Belts and others must communicate their insights. The Accelerator makes it easier to do this by linking PowerPoint directly to data sources such as Excel files. The Accelerator can automatically generate PowerPoint reports, thus eliminating the tedious (and inefficient) use of highly trained Black Belts and Green Belts to copy, paste, resize, reposition and otherwise dress up data for presentations. Such work often consumes an inordinate amount of time, so this should be a welcome relief. With the Accelerator, creating a presentation-

quality graphic or daily financial report is a simple point-and-click operation.

The Business Scorecard Management tool also enables organizations to customize views using a “stoplight” metaphor. Red, green and yellow indicators tell Master Black Belts and Black Belts whether they’re on budget (green), in danger of going over budget (yellow) or already over budget (red). The indicators can be customized for whatever function best matches a team’s needs—whether that be budget, schedule or something else.

Enterprise project management

To simplify the process of managing Six Sigma projects across the enterprise, customized Project Guides lead Six Sigma teams through each DMAIC project phase. The Accelerator provides customizable browser-based dashboard views showing Six Sigma financial results on executive dashboards and providing drill-down capabilities to help identify root causes. It’s possible to do real-time analysis of financial data with direct links to financial systems. Project status and resource utilization can also be monitored in real time. Six Sigma leadership can use the Accelerator’s views to see how Green Belts, Black Belts and other Six Sigma human resources are being used. This information can be analyzed automatically to identify, store, access and apply best practices.

Six Sigma tools management

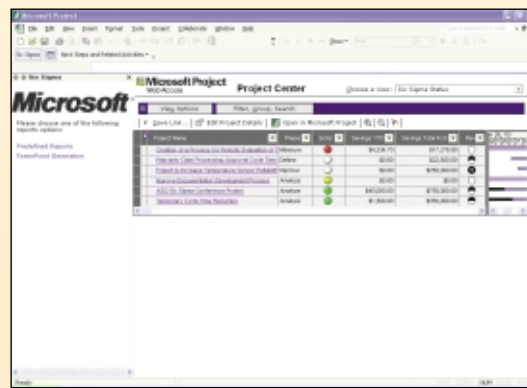
The Accelerator enables organizations to work with software they already know and in which they’ve already invested. It also works well with non-Microsoft products. Third-party tools for training, statistical analysis and process simulation can be accessed directly using the Accelerator. The same approach—adding integration code to create an Accelerator interface—can be used to integrate back-office systems.

Knowledge management

Organizations will enjoy the additional DMAIC customization that Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma provides for SharePoint Team Services. Documents stored on the team site can be organized according to phase. And, because the SharePoint site is accessible from any Internet-connected PC, Master Black Belts

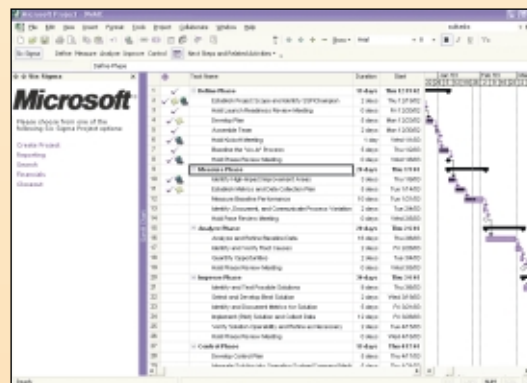
The Accelerator Up Close

Business Scorecards—Dashboards



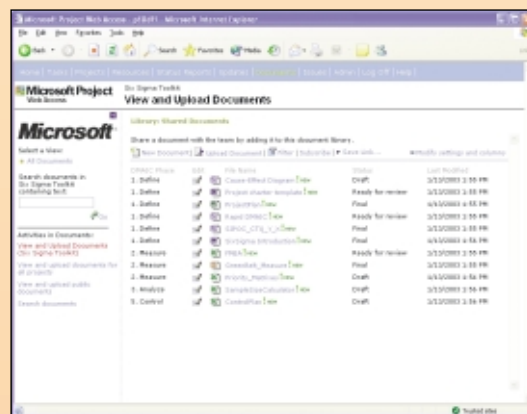
Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma offers customized functionality that helps customers draw more from their existing software. A browser-based dashboard leverages Microsoft SharePoint Team Services and Project Web Access to provide Six Sigma professionals with customizable project tracking tools that map to DMAIC project phases and can provide Master Black Belts with at-a-glance views of whether projects are on schedule and how they are tracking financially.

DMAIC Project Guides



Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma provides added functionality designed specifically for Six Sigma organizations. The Accelerator tools provide Black Belts and Green Belts with custom interactive Project Guides that lead Six Sigma teams through each DMAIC project phase, including integrated tollgates.

Document Repositories



Built on the Project 2002 family, Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma is an integrated set of products and services that leverages existing software such as Microsoft Project and SharePoint Team Services and is customized for Six Sigma practitioners. SharePoint Team Services and Project Web Access provide teams with online libraries in which they can store documents for review or collaboration, start online conversations, conduct team surveys, arrange notifications or specific updates, and more.

and Black Belts can make decisions based on the most accurate data available, regardless of where they are.

E-learning

For a variety of reasons, including cost of travel and pure convenience, it can be advantageous to offer training tools online. Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma seamlessly integrates with third-party learning

tools and offers online training via SharePoint Team Services. In addition to serving as "home base" for the training information, the site also tracks completed training.

Key players

The Accelerator helps key Six Sigma personnel in a variety of ways:

■ *Executives/Champions.* Executive dashboards present various views and

summaries of Six Sigma project data. Views can be top-level "Big Y's," or you can drill down to get closer to root causes before selecting specific areas to address.

■ *Master Black Belts.* Operations- and business-level scorecards take executive drill-down a step further, to actual project selection, chartering, project tracking and resource management. This includes the ability to monitor the activities of Green Belts, a resource too often mismanaged in many Six Sigma deployments. Master Black Belts can also use the Accelerator to build the dashboards needed by executives or to create special reports in response to requests from Executives and Champions.

■ *Black Belts.* Black Belts can monitor progress on their project portfolio and ensure that "tollgates" are closed as projects move along the DMAIC cycle.

■ *Green Belts.* DMAIC project activity guides, story-boarding and collaboration tools are accessible. Team members have access to collaboration and project progress reporting tools.

Keep in mind that Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma only addresses the information dimension of your Six Sigma deployment. Although this is a very important piece of the puzzle, there's still leadership, customer and stakeholder relationships, training, and a host of other critical issues that you'll have to deal with person-to-person. Still, even if the Accelerator can't win over that cynic in accounting, it can make it easier for you to effectively manage your Six Sigma information. And that may just give you enough extra time to find a way to convert those cynics to your way of thinking.

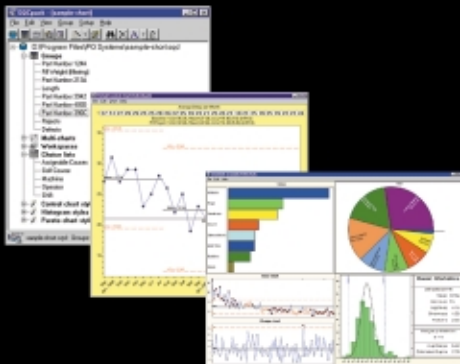
As of press time, Microsoft Accelerator for Six Sigma is not yet available. (It's scheduled for a May release.) If it lives up to its advance billing, it should be a welcome addition to the Six Sigma toolkit.

About the author

Thomas Pyzdek is a consultant in Six Sigma. He has written more than 50 books and software and training products, including The Six Sigma Handbook (McGraw-Hill, 2000). Learn more about Six Sigma at www.pyzdek.com. Comments about this article can be sent to letters@qualitydigest.com.

Black belt or not, software **YOU** can use!

The new *SQCpack 2000* is a breakthrough in SPC software that everyone on your team can use—right out of the box. *SQCpack* adapts to your lab, office, and shop floor. Whether you're a black belt or a green belt, *SQCpack* will help you measure, improve, and achieve world class performance.



SQCpack[®] 2000



Request one of our free, fully-functional trial CDs. To get yours (with no obligation), call 800-777-3020.

Or download *SQCpack 2000* from www.sqcpack.com and become an *SQCpack* champion in minutes!

For a FREE trial CD, call 800-777-3020
or visit www.sqcpack.com/free.htm

