

Case Study: Using Lean Six Sigma to Accelerate Product Development



Guidon's 3P methodology for developing new products and processes is designed to develop and deploy new products and services in less than half the time of traditional processes. The process links products and service to actual customer and market opportunities, focuses development effort on the most marketable features, accelerates the breakeven cycle for new products and services, and significantly reduces costs. The methodology follows a five-phase process including: (1) Plan and Prepare to gather Voice-of-the-Customer (VOC) data, (2) Translate the VOC data into Process Requirements, (3) Conceptual Design of the Process, (4) Detailed Design of the Process, and (5) Pilot/Roll Out of the Process. In addition, the Guidon 3P methodology relies heavily on Obeya principles from Toyota's proven product development process.

To begin, a cross functional team, all vested in the advertising product design cycle, was assembled to lead the efforts. Every team member received some basic training on 3P principles and the methodology as well as concepts on Systems Thinking and VOC.

The team then began identifying and categorizing its customers and prioritized which customers' input would be required to substantiate any product or development cycle decision. The team segmented their focus on the advertisers that used their products, the sales force that sold the products, and viewers that ultimately would decide if the ad was compelling enough to drive a sale. They also created a preliminary list of product attributes the company's advertising customers would care most about, and created a plan for validating which attributes were most important.

Next, the team gathered the VOC data by interviewing and speaking directly with a selection of each customer segment. Using this customer-focused feedback and employing Lean Six Sigma principals, the Guidon team worked with the company to create six potential, high-level concepts that would help the company deliver its advertising products in a way that fit its customers' needs.

Finally, after comparing the merits of each process design versus the product attributes and Lean Six Sigma principles, the team decided on a hybrid version of two of the concepts. The team then developed detailed product specifications, identified resources and created a development plan, and selected a pilot region in partnership with the regional leadership.

From here a team was deployed to develop the product working in a cross-functional approach, the marketing and sales components were developed in parallel, and the region was prepared for a pilot. Within months, the new product was designed and successfully deployed from scratch in contrast to the past where the same process would take as much as three years for a similar offering.

Client: A leading provider of cable & communication services focused on cable, commerce, and content

Industry: Information Technology

Service: 3P, VOC

Challenge:

- Need to accelerate the development of new advertising products to support their growth strategy
- Often did not meet the needs of the market they were intended to serve
- Multiple reworks before the new product could begin to generate revenue

Solutions:

- Adopted Guidon's 3P (Product and Process Preparation) approach as the model to evaluate customer needs, prioritize features, streamline development efforts and redesign the deployment process

Results:

- Products that once took upwards of three years to develop and bring to market can now take 12 months or less to deliver



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