

**6 Sixes (Six Sigma)**  
**As appeared in ISHN's "FDO"**  
**July 2001**

Last time I wrote about "5 Nines vs. 4 Sevens" or "business<sup>(N)</sup> (N = to the nth degree). If you were paying attention then, let me one up that (5 nines vs. 4 sevens) 6 sixes (as in Six Sigma) beats 5 nines. Now it gets real interesting! (if you like this kind of stuff – I do, can you tell?)

Sigma here is a statistical term (or value) used to describe how close a product comes to meeting its quality goal. The higher the sigma value the better. One sigma means 68% of the products are acceptable. Three sigma means 99.7%, and Six Sigma means achieving process perfection 99.9999997% of the time! – that's only 3.4 defects or less per million! A level of Six Sigma represents the apex of quality – virtually eliminating defects from every product and (or) process in a company.

Some companies reportedly subscribing to the Six Sigma program include GE, Motorola, Allied Signal and DuPont. Many frameworks exist for implementing Six Sigma. Consultants all over the world have developed proprietary methods of implementing six sigma. A Six Sigma team can be outsourced for your company. These people are not your every day staff personnel – these are extraordinary perfectionists to the highest degree.

Do you need Six Sigma in your industry? That's for you to decide – depends on what type products or service you provide. Precision parts, instruments and/or life saving devices? Worth considering – non-threatening products maybe not – your call – but.....

6 sixes beat 5 nines beat 4 sevens –

Think about it.

George J. Hayward