

Lean Six Sigma: what belt fits my job?

Different jobs have different requirements... Obviously. When it comes to Lean Six Sigma it does raise the question, what level is needed for my job? Or, since Lean Six Sigma works with belts: what belt fits my job?

In Lean Six Sigma, there are four different belts: Yellow, Orange, Green and Black. In short: a Yellow Belt knows the basic principles and most important instruments of Lean Six Sigma. A Black Belt has extensive knowledge of everything Lean Six Sigma and can use this to independently set out a strategy for a Six Sigma project implementation.

In this article, we will dive deeper into all four of the belts, so you will know what each of them brings to the table.

Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt

The Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt certification is aimed at anyone who wants to learn the basic principles of Lean Six Sigma and the most important Lean Six Sigma instruments. It is meant for anyone who participates in a Lean project as a team member or independently wants to apply the Lean philosophy and basic instruments in an improvement project. It is accessible for all education levels.

As a Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt you will

- have an understanding of Six Sigma terminology.
- know the basics of data collecting and measuring outcomes.
- have a toolkit filled with methods for incorporating Six Sigma methodology to improve processes and achieve business goals.
- know how to make improvements in day-to-day work tasks (for example cutting down on wasted time and reducing the cycle time on a process).

Yellow Belts typically provide help on projects but are not in a leadership role. However, for some, earning a Yellow Belt will provide the springboard to moving into leadership roles by earning an Orange, Green and Black Belt.

Lean Six Sigma Orange Belt

Employees who are directly or indirectly involved in Lean or Six Sigma projects would benefit greatly from obtaining the Lean Six Sigma Orange Belt. This includes process owners, administrative, financial and quality assurance staff, operators, company managers, supervisors and engineers.

The Orange Belt certification is aimed at employees who are already familiar with the Lean Six Sigma methodology and tools and are probably already Yellow Belts. They are skilled in the field of Basic Problem Solving and often team leaders or supervisors who possess an in-depth knowledge of a process, product or equipment.

Candidates choose a Lean Six Sigma Orange Belt training when they want to learn everything about Lean and Six Sigma in a short time and want to be able to apply the most important instruments themselves. After the training candidates can use the learned techniques and carry out simple projects.

Lean Six Sigma Green Belt

To become a specialist in executing Lean Six Sigma projects the Green Belt is the way to go. Candidates with a higher educational level, preferably with statistical a background, can become LSS-specialists with the right combination of in-depth expertise and knowledge of statistical analysis and structured LSS methodology.

Project and department managers, process owners and process managers, but also design, process and quality engineers in all kinds of fields benefit greatly from Green Belt certification. After their training, a Green Belt:

- Can lead a 'Six Sigma improvement' project team.
- Can operate under the supervision of a Six Sigma Black Belt.
- Can analyze and solve quality problems.
- Will have participated in a project, but has not led a project
- Will have coordinated with the data collection process

team of their project and have validated the measurement system.

- Will usually work on projects within their own functional area.
- Will be able to improve their team facilitation skills.
- Can create a Develop Project Charter and SIPOC (Supplier, Input, Process, and Output) Diagram for their project.

Green Belts are trained on the Six Sigma improvement methodology and will lead a process improvement team as part of their full-time job. They have a deep understanding of the overall process and they work with centralized project managers in delivering feedback and driving performance goals. Their main focus is on the decision making and strategy-building components of key elements in the Six Sigma project planning process.

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt

when it comes to methodology and have extensive experience in the field, both in manufacturing and business environments. They generally have a bachelor's degree, but many have more advanced education such as a master's degree. And most importantly: Black Belts have completed Black Belt training and gained certification which enables them to lead projects, train and coach other personnel and complete problem-solving projects.

Black Belts are mostly project and department managers, (business) consultants, process owners, design, process and quality engineers and production and quality managers. Black Belts typically set the strategy for a Six Sigma project implementation. Working with executive leadership, they select and prioritize projects to ensure work aligns with strategic goals. They create project plans and guide team members, including personnel certified at the Yellow, Orange and Green Belt levels, to complete projects in a timely manner. A certified Black Belt usually trains other team members on how to use Six Sigma tools and techniques, such as control charts, histograms and a root cause analysis.