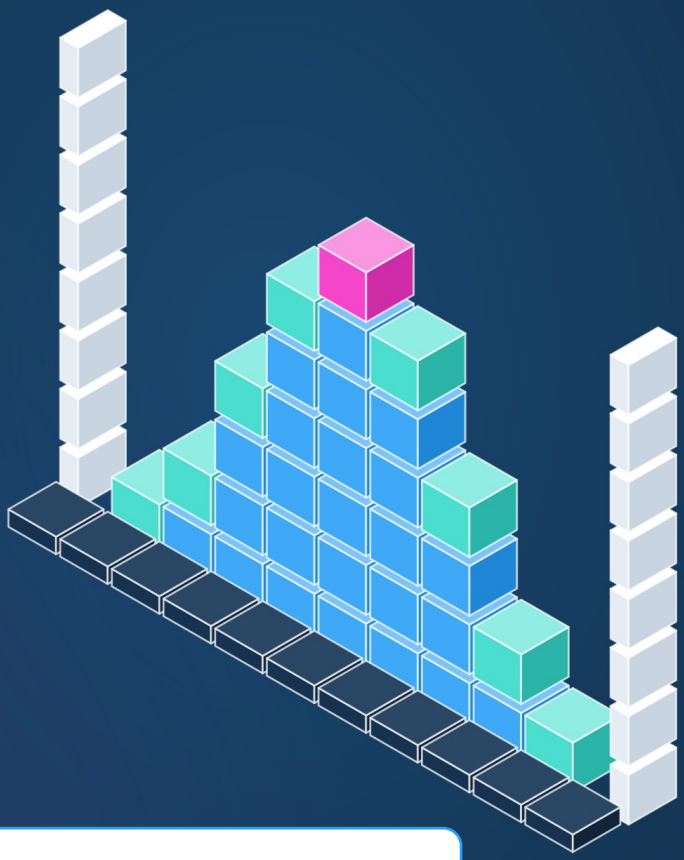
OPERATIONS INSIDER

LEAN · OPERATIONS · LEADERSHIP

THE MANAGER'S SIX SIGMA QUICK START CHECKLIST

Score your improvement program in an hour, with evidence you can point at.



DATA. CAUSE. CONTROL.

START HERE

How to Use This Check

One improvement program or one running project, one hour, twenty-five statements, one number.

01 LOOK	02 SCORE	03 ACT
Open the real evidence: project charters, measurement studies, capability reports, control charts, control plans. Do not score from memory.	Score each statement from 0 to 4. Without a document, a chart or a data file you can point at, the score is 2 or lower.	Pick the weakest block and agree one action with an owner and a date before you leave.

The Scoring Scale

POINTS	MEANING
0	Not in place.
1	Happens occasionally, depends on individuals.
2	Partly in place, not consistent across projects.
3	Mostly in place and visible in the evidence.
4	Consistently in place, visible, reviewed and improved.

> **WHY EVIDENCE**
>
> **Six Sigma is a promise to decide with data. A check that is scored from impressions breaks that promise on the first page. If the data is not there, the score is low, and that is the most useful result of the check.**

Before You Start

- **Scope:** one site or one improvement program with at least three finished or running projects.
- **Evidence:** two project charters, one measurement system study, one capability report, the control charts of one critical characteristic and one control plan.
- **Tone:** you check the system, not the belts. Ask how a decision was reached, not who made a mistake.

THE CHECK

01 Project Selection and Define

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
01	Improvement projects are selected from data on cost of poor quality, customer complaints and losses, not from opinions in a meeting.	
02	Every project has a written charter with problem statement, baseline, target, financial benefit, scope, team and dates, signed by a champion.	
03	The voice of the customer is translated into measurable critical to quality characteristics with specification limits.	
04	A SIPOC shows suppliers, inputs, process steps, outputs and customers, and the team agrees where the project starts and ends.	
05	Each DMAIC phase ends with a tollgate review where the champion checks the evidence and decides to continue, change or stop.	

02 Measure

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
06	The measurement system for the main characteristic has been checked with a gage repeatability and reproducibility study before data is collected.	
07	Data collection follows a written plan: what, where, how often, by whom, with which gage and how the data is recorded.	
08	The baseline is shown as a run chart or control chart over time, not only as an average.	
09	Process capability is calculated with Cp and Cpk from stable data, and the defect rate is known in percent or ppm.	
10	The cost of the problem per year is calculated with the controller, using volume, defect rate and cost per defect.	

THE CHECK

03 Analyze

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
11	Possible causes are collected in a structured way and narrowed down with data, not with votes.	
12	Hypotheses about causes are tested with the right statistical test, and the team can explain the result in plain words.	
13	Relationships between inputs and the output are quantified, for example with regression, before settings are changed.	
14	A process FMEA is used to rank failure modes and causes by severity, occurrence and detection.	
15	The root causes are verified at the process: switching the cause on and off switches the effect on and off.	

04 Improve

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
16	Solutions are tied to verified root causes and rated for effect, cost, risk and speed before one is chosen.	
17	Where several factors interact, designed experiments are used instead of changing one factor at a time.	
18	The chosen solution is piloted under real conditions with a defined success criterion and enough data.	
19	The improvement is confirmed with the same measurement and the same capability method as the baseline.	
20	The financial benefit is confirmed by the controller, not estimated by the project team.	

THE CHECK

05 Control and Sustain

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
21	A control plan lists every critical characteristic with method, sample size, frequency, gage and reaction rule.	
22	Critical characteristics are monitored with control charts at the process, and operators know the reaction to signals.	
23	Standards, work instructions and training are updated, and the project is handed over to a named process owner.	
24	Results are checked again after three and six months, and the project is closed only when the gain has held.	
25	Green belts, black belts and champions are trained, coached and given time, and a portfolio shows all projects with their benefits.	

Your Result

BLOCK	POINTS	OUT OF
01 Project Selection and Define		20
02 Measure		20
03 Analyze		20
04 Improve		20
05 Control and Sustain		20
TOTAL		100

YOUR RESULT

Read the Number

The total tells you how much your improvement work depends on opinion. The weakest block tells you where to start.

TOTAL	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT TO DO FIRST
0 to 39	Firefighting. Problems are fixed by experience, data is collected after the decision.	Pick one costly problem, write a charter, check the gage, measure the baseline.
40 to 59	Tools without system. Some people know the statistics, projects run without tollgates.	Introduce tollgates with a champion. Make measurement system checks mandatory.
60 to 79	Method in use. DMAIC works, but results fade after the project ends.	Control plans and control charts at the process, checks after three and six months.
80 to 100	Capability. Projects are selected, run and sustained by a system.	Hold the level. Steer the project portfolio by cost of poor quality, develop the next belts.

Your Three Priorities

NO.	WHAT TO IMPROVE	FIRST ACTION	OWNER	DUE

THE RULE FOR EVERY ACTION

Owner and date, or it did not happen. Repeat the check after six months and compare the blocks, not the feeling.

What to Do Next

NEXT STEP	WHAT YOU GET
SIX SIGMA STARTER KIT	The guide for your first DMAIC project in 30 days, plus the workbook with project charter, capability calculation, control chart and tollgates.

NEXT STEP	WHAT YOU GET
SIX SIGMA EXCELLENCE BUNDLE	The full playbook, a two-day green belt kickoff workshop, eight templates, the Excel system with measurement study, tests, regression, FMEA, experiments and control charts, and a workshop deck.

Both are available at operationsinsider.com.