



Lean on Us

Six Sigma expert and co-founder of OpExecs and her own consulting firm, **SUSAN BEAUCHAMP** gives businesses a helping hand to create positive change

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JunXion caught up with Susan Beauchamp, owner of Beauchamp Consulting and cofounder of OpExecs, to chat about her business, the Lean Six Sigma process, and the ways in which she helps companies improve their customers' experiences. As a small business, OpExecs' mastery of Six Sigma principles has had big results for clients ranging from top executives with Fortune 500 companies to governmental agencies. As a consultant, Susan is a recognized presenter, trainer, and instructional designer. To her credit, she has helped clients collectively implement improvement projects worth over \$90 million.

CFX: Tell us about your consulting firm.

Susan Beauchamp: We do process optimization, which includes change leadership, team, and executive coaching. When a company needs to go through a transformative effort due to various reasons, maybe their customers are unhappy, the company wants to be more efficient, or they have a need to improve the way they do things, they call me. I help with whatever changes



need to take place. I'm the sole owner, but I work with four to six colleagues who also own their own businesses. We come together when it makes sense to do so, given a company's needs and scale requirements. We're all experts in process optimization, whether it be in manufacturing, finance, healthcare, government operations, tech, or telecom; we have experience in driving improvement and change that lasts.

CFX: What is the difference between lean management and Six Sigma?

Susan: Lean management is focused on adding value and reducing waste by leveraging the skillset and knowledge of the people closest to the work. Six Sigma is a method to solve problems using data. It requires a laser beam focus on customers' key problem areas. Users follow the DMAIC approach of (D) define, (M) measure, (A) analyze, (I) improve, and (C) control to drive short- and long-term improvement that lasts. When learning the approach, people begin with a simple project and some techniques at what we call the green belt level and then progress to black belt and master black belt levels. I started this learning when I was working with General Electric in the mid-90s. After helping GE and their customers drive results, I became very proficient at hitting the ground running and working with teams to start with smaller problems and eventually move into bigger problems. Once you get good at it, you get a reputation for it, and people call you.

CFX: What first sparked your interest in this area?



Susan: It was early on in my career. I was working for General Electric. The CEO at the time (Jack Welch) wanted to start an initiative focused on improving quality based upon input from an employee survey. This survey reflected that employees' biggest concern for the future of the company was the degrading reputation of the quality of GE products. That was in 1997, and I have been doing this ever since, first with GE and then with GE's customers, and then with my own business customers when I launched my consulting business in 2002.

CFX: What has been the most rewarding aspect of what you do?

Susan: I'm very excited when I see people change the way they approach problem-solving and become permanently better at it. Once they go through the methodology, they are much more effective, and their leadership team sees this, responding with bigger challenges and a larger scope of authority.

CFX: What has been the most challenging?

Susan: At times the right solution doesn't always win. From a process perspective, sometimes people don't want to change. [It's important to know] the politics of the environment and the willingness of leaders and the team to drive something different.

CFX: If you knew then what you know today, what would you have done differently?

Susan: I still struggle with assessing the political environment. You have to make sure you have advocates for change, know where the power sources are, and stay connected to that. Influencing skills are very important and, most importantly, influencing laterally. The most important thing is to get the

people on your level to be supportive. Pay attention to your peers. Be honest about the challenges and ask them for help.

CFX: Who has been your greatest influence?

Susan: My dad. He had tremendous confidence in me always. He is a deep thinker and has always encouraged me to take risks. He is extremely hardworking and showed me that it's always worth it to believe in yourself, keep asking questions, and pursue life-long learning with an attitude that is open to change.

CFX: What's your go-to read for business insights?

Susan: *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, and books, which others recommend to me.

CFX: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Susan: Semi-retired, but continuing to coach young people to be better problem solvers and to take risks as they grow.

CFX: What do you love most about living in this area?

Susan: My gosh, there are so many things! I love being close to DC and Philly – to major cities and to the Pocono Mountains as well as the beach. I grew up here; I have friends and family here. I love being outdoors. I play tennis. I love the four seasons [even winter]; I love a good snowfall and being stuck inside a bit.

For more information on how Susan Beauchamp can help optimize your business, go to www.opexecs.com.

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Monica Justice, Founder & Professional EOS Implementer*

monica@theallelegroup.com
484-880-3667

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