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### Six Sigma: The role of goals in improvement teams

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#### Abstract

The tenets of goal theory have been well established as a motivation mechanism in the management literature. However, some quality-management advocates, such as W. Edwards Deming, often criticize the use of goals. This research investigates the tension between goals and quality management in the Six Sigma context. We find empirical support that goals can be effective in Six Sigma improvement teams when teams adhere to the Six Sigma tools and method. However, challenging goals are counterproductive when Six Sigma teams do not use the tools and methods rigorously. This research reconciles the differences between quality management and goal theory by showing that the Six Sigma tools and method interact with goals.



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