

## Productivity *Futures*

### *The Power of Six Sigma*

The book is another in the recent spate of books based around a narrative - used to address 'lessons to be learned'. The approach can be useful in addressing a complex subject - and can make a dull, though very worthy, subject more interesting. This one is based around the story of a manager who is rejected by a failing organization that is itself trapped by its traditional managerial culture. The author illustrates an alternative way of working which could have prevented the problems underlying the failure.

The concept of six sigma - though essentially very simple (see above) - can be daunting to comprehend 'at first pass' and this book does provide a way of 'sneaking up' on the concept, and of explaining its application. Some of the narrative takes almost the form of a frequently asked questions list - using one of the characters to ask the questions that readers are most likely to want to ask themselves. The six sigma approach is essentially one of continuous improvement based on solid measured evidence. This evidence is used to identify the source of under-performance, to measure 'where the organization is' and 'where it wants to be'. The organization then plots a course from one to the other - simple, really! From this book, there is a clear lesson that 'fancy' techniques achieve nothing if they are not applied with commitment, with consistency and with backing from the leadership at the top of the organization. The style of this book makes it easily digestible - but the concept of six sigma, and this underlying message about its application, comes through clearly.