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Four Principles for Jump-starting Performance Improvement - Understanding Non-conformance

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Four Principles for Jump-starting Performance Improvement - Understanding Non-conformance (#4 in the series [Four Principles for Jump-starting Performance Improvement](#))
By [Forrest W. Breyfogle, III](#)

Non-conformance can be traced to two different types of variability. One is special cause, or glitches in the process, such as faulty assembly of a product by an employee. The other is common cause, such as predictable variability of suppliers' raw materials or a flaw in the design of a product or a system.

In many organizations special cause and common cause issues are treated identically. The business goes into fire-fighting mode whenever a product is not meeting specification. Quite often the blame game comes into active play and the problem is resolved (temporarily) with someone's reprimand or termination.

Successful organizations distinguish between the two types of non-conformance. Typically they find the vast majority of non-conformance situations require that the system itself must be modified. W. Edwards Deming has estimated that 94% of problems are due to common cause variability and only 6% are due to special cause variability. Successful businesses use IEE to analyze the system up and down the line to eliminate or at least lessen the frequency of common cause non-conformance.

Adapted from "The Integrated Enterprise Excellence System: An Enhanced, Unified Approach to Balanced Scorecards, Strategic Planning, and Business Improvement," (copyright Bridgeway Books., 2008) by Forrest W. Breyfogle III, CEO of Smarter Solutions, Inc., www.smartersolutions.com

Forrest W. Breyfogle, III, is the founder and CEO of www.smartersolutions.com, an Austin, Texas-based company. He has authored and co-authored 11 books and published over 80 technical resources for well known, worldwide publications on Six Sigma, Lean Six Sigma and Lean methods. In 2004, he was the recipient of the American Society for Quality Crosby Medal for his book, "Implementing Six Sigma," 2nd edition. Breyfogle is an ASQ Fellow and a member of the board of advisors for the University of Texas Center for Performing Excellence.

Smarter Solutions maintains an articles section, which can be found at <http://www.smartersolutions.com/articles.php>.

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About the Author
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In a professional career spanning over a quarter century, Forrest Breyfogle has established himself as a leading edge thinker, a prolific author, an innovative consultant, a world-class educator, and a successful business executive. His work is documented in eleven books and over ninety articles on the topic of quality improvement.

A professional engineer, Forrest is also a member of the board of advisors for the University of Texas Center for Performance Excellence. He is the founder and CEO of Smarter Solutions, Inc., an Austin, Texas based consulting firm offering business measurement and improvement consultation and education to a distinguished list of clients worldwide, including BAMA, CIGNA, Dell, HP, IBM, Oracle Packaging, Sherwin Williams, Cameron, TIMET, and TATA. He served his country on active

duty in the US Army for 2 years, and has played an active leadership role in professional and educational organizations. Forrest received the prestigious Crosby Medal from the American Society for Quality (ASQ) in 2004 for his book, *Implementing Six Sigma* (second edition). This award is presented annually by the American Society for Quality to the individual who has authored a distinguished book contributing significantly to the extension of the philosophy and application of the principles, methods, or techniques of quality management

He is a widely recognized authority in the field of management improvement and is a frequent speaker before professional associations and businesses. His earlier work in the field of management science has been widely acclaimed. A previous book, *Implementing Six Sigma*, sold over 40,000 copies and still ranks among the top Amazon books in Applied Mathematics/Engineering Statistics and Industrial Engineering /Quality Control.

He founded Smarter Solutions in 1992 after a 24-year career at IBM. The associates of Smarter Solutions specialize in helping companies throughout the world improve their bottom line and customer satisfaction through the implementation of techniques that are beyond traditional Lean Six Sigma and the balanced scorecard methodologies. His latest and most extensive work has been in the documentation of a new system of enterprise management, the Integrated Enterprise Excellence (IEE) system, in a series of four books. IEE provides a detailed roadmap that builds on and integrates the best practices of earlier disciplines like Six Sigma, Lean, TQM, PDCA, DOE, and TPS combined with innovative analytical tools to produce improvements at the highest level of an enterprise.

In addition to assisting hundreds of major clients in the wise implementation of improvement systems worldwide, Forrest has also developed over 300 hours of classroom instruction used to train executives, managers, and Black Belt practitioners to plan for, implement, and manage IEE systems. He also leads formal seminars and workshops worldwide.

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