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CORPORATE LOUNGE

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Analyse this: Why dabbawalas to Fortune 500 firms are hooked to Six Sigma

Pradeep Deshpande, an exponent of this 11-step, five-phase management tool, talks about its potential

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“THE Six Sigma can be applied to any aspect of life,” says Pradeep Deshpande. President and CEO of the US-based Six Sigma and Advanced Controls Inc, Deshpande who was in the city to explore business opportunities has applied this management tool to all aspects of his life - even his son's wedding.

Six Sigma, an 11 step, five-phase method produces few defects - in fact -3.45 defects per million opportunities. “This method was pioneered at Motorola during the late 1970s but it found popularity when adopted by GE. In the old days it was possible for corpo-

rations and government offices to focus on the average. In today's competitive world though one needs to ensure that the defect levels in any process are as small as possible and Six Sigma ensures that,” says Deshpande. Six Sigma principles include the phases of scope, measure, analyse, improve and control.

Professor of chemical engineering at the University of Louisville, USA, Deshpande was introduced to the concept of Six Sigma when in the USA, through his search for excellence. “In 1972 when I was spending a year at IIT Kanpur, Yashwantrao Chavan during a visit to the institute asked what we could do for the country. At the time I had wondered what a chemical engineer could

possibly do. Now I realise that Six Sigma if applied in India can take it ahead,” he says.

Deshpande has spent more than 40 years in the United States, but makes frequent trips to India to promote the concept that he so strongly believes in.

“Whether it's the dabbawalas of Mumbai or Fortune 500 companies all employ the principles of Six Sigma,” says he.

Although Prince Charles may have discovered the near faultless precision with which Mumbai's dabbawallas deliver tiffins across the length and breadth of the city, Deshpande had written about it many years ago as an example of the application of Six Sigma principles even if done unknowingly.