KISS Software Rationale

There are many general-purpose statistical packages written by statisticians for statisticians. Some of the packages have target audiences of statistics students in colleges and universities and the industrial statistician. Our software was created specifically for the Lean Six Sigma practitioners (Black Belts, Green Belts, and Sponsors--in both manufacturing and transactional) and is therefore not a general-purpose statistics package. Our software was designed for ease of use and thus does not include many of the extraneous tools that only PhDs in statistics might be able to use appropriately (i.e., at the right time and place). Many of the commonly used software packages were developed before Lean Six Sigma practitioners came into vogue and have been retrofit to accommodate the relatively recent emphasis on Lean Six Sigma. Our software is integrated into our training material and was concurrently developed along with our materials. In other words, it was designed to support the material. We are the only company known to have concurrently developed Lean Six Sigma software and materials in an integrated fashion.

When we started teaching Process Improvement it became clear that too much time was spent teaching people how to use software instead of teaching people the concepts of Lean Six Sigma. Initially, the need for custom software wasn't as clear as it should have been. Many of us have a statistics background, and to us using Minitab or SAS or Statgraphics or Statistica was easy. However, to the students it was not necessarily easy. We spent more time answering questions on software than we did on concepts. As a result, we decided to create software that specifically met the needs of a Lean Six Sigma practitioner. Our belief is that software should be so easy to use that it is a natural extension of the material, and that we should not have to spend excessive time in the classroom teaching the student how to use the software.

The reason we chose to host our software in Excel was ease of use and familiarity with the platform. Many people are already accustomed to Excel, and therefore using Excel's familiar environment was an easy decision. In the mid-1990's, we considered moving our software out of the Excel environment. We asked our customers what they wanted, and we received an overwhelmingly negative response to the idea of leaving Excel. Our customers love working directly in Excel. They can perform analysis and e-mail the results to anyone with Excel. To view the statistical analysis and/or results, one need not have our software, only Excel. Software output is also easily transported to other MS Office products such as MS Word and PowerPoint for documentation and presentation purposes.

For many years we have had a strong following in the software market. Now, over 75% of our software sales are not linked to the Lean Six Sigma training we provide. The reason this phenomenon is occurring is that our software is easy to use and extremely powerful, with many of the extraneous features that one might never expect to use in a lifetime simply not available to complicate any decisions. Just the existence of myriad features complicates the use of a software product. Our KISS principle should not be interpreted to mean "lack of power." On the contrary, KISS means both "ease of use" and "power." It becomes more powerful because it is in fact more widely used and if not used for an extended time, it is still quick and easy to gear up. Furthermore, because most Lean Six Sigma practitioners will already have been exposed to MS Excel, they will not be intimidated by this software because it appears as a natural extension to MS Excel. Thus, the cultural barrier of having to use a new software package is diminished and anybody, including those who have never used a statistical software package, can use our KISS software—with ease, power and minimal gear-up time, all at low cost.