

SIMPLE CASE STUDY

HOW AIRLINES USED LEAN SIX SIGMA METHODOLOGY TO SAVE MILLIONS!



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The Big Idea!

- What if *REMOVING* just one peanut, one olive, or one lettuce leaf could save your company hundreds of thousands of dollars?
- That's exactly what these airlines did — using Lean Six Sigma thinking long before it became popular.





Southwest Airlines – The Peanut Principle

Southwest Airlines instructed its supplier to put three fewer peanuts in every snack bag.



Annual Savings: **\$300,000+**



Lean Lesson: Remove small inefficiencies that add no value to the customer.





American Airlines – The Olive Story

- In 1987, American Airlines removed one olive from every first-class salad.
- Passengers didn't notice
 - 💰 Annual Savings: **\$40,000+**
 - 👉 Six Sigma Lesson: Focus on Critical to Quality (CTQ) features — customers care about experience, not excess.





Delta Airlines – The Lettuce Leaf Cut

- Delta stopped using the decorative lettuce leaf under salads.



Annual Savings: **\$1,000,000**



Process Improvement Lesson: Every step in the process must add measurable value.





The Common Thread

– Lean Thinking

All three airlines applied the Lean Six Sigma mindset:

- ✓ Identify waste (non-value steps)
- ✓ Measure what matters
- ✓ Eliminate what customers don't value
- ✓ Sustain results





DMAIC in Action

They practiced the DMAIC framework before it even had a name.

- DEFINE – Noticed hidden cost (food portioning)
- MEASURE – Calculated cost per passenger
- ANALYZE – Verified customer didn't value the change
- IMPROVE – Adjusted process
- CONTROL – Standardized new specification





Key Takeaways

- *Continuous improvement doesn't require big projects.*
- *Sometimes, it's about one small idea applied consistently.*
- *Small Change. Big Impact.*





Challenge for You

- Look around your process — where are your peanuts, olives, or lettuce leaves?
- Every hidden waste is a potential win.
- Start small. Think Lean. Measure your results.

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The Operational Excellence Academy

- *At The Operational Excellence Academy, we help teams uncover these micro-improvements that lead to macro-impact.*
- *Train your teams with us in Lean Six Sigma Belts – White/ Yellow/ Green and see how small ideas can create massive value.*
- *Simplify. Standardize. Sustain.*



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