

i3 CONGRATULATES TWO FINALISTS IN THE ANNUAL IQPC SIX SIGMA EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The International Quality and Productivity Center (IQPC) selected two i3 projects as finalists in the six sigma International Quality Excellence Awards for North America, announced in January 2006. Open to companies from all industries, these awards honor, recognize and celebrate six sigma projects that demonstrate true best practices.

The finalists were i3's Customer Feedback Program and its Regulatory Document Cycle Time Reduction.

Customer Feedback Program:

Many of i3's customers have multiple, simultaneous projects contracted to i3. In fact, nearly 90% of i3's business is with longstanding or repeat customers. Although customers frequently provide project teams with feedback, there was no proactive, standardized and effective feedback collection system used throughout the organization. As a result, i3 could not summarize feedback from customers or ensure the sharing of feedback and lessons learned across project teams and/or departments.

i3 created The Customer Feedback Program and an associated database, called the Client Satisfaction System (CSS), to gather requests for customer feedback on all i3 projects. The resulting data is being utilized to measure i3's overall customer satisfaction on a company, customer and project level, and identify areas for process improvement. This program is helping i3 better meet customer needs and improve efficiencies across the i3 businesses.

Regulatory Document Cycle Time Reduction:

As part of the clinical trial process, all investigators must prepare and submit regulatory documents to an Institutional Review Board in order to obtain approval to conduct the trial. Responsibility for collecting and submitting these documents is usually assigned to the Clinical Research Organization (CRO).

i3 believed that its collection of these regulatory documents from the investigative sites was taking too long; more importantly, the amount of variation within the process was very large. It took an average of 45 days to submit all regulatory documents, with a standard deviation of 39 days. The defect rate within this data set was 48%. The lengthy cycle time meant excess follow up with the investigative sites as to the completion status of the regulatory documents package, resulting in an annual loss of revenue of \$600 thousand.

i3 implemented a process change in April of 2005. Since then, i3's cycle time for completed packets has decreased to 28 days (38 percent improvement), the standard deviation in the process has dropped to six days (85 percent improvement), and the defect rate decreased to two percent. In addition, a software-based application is being piloted to further improve the process.