
Understanding Statistical Process Control

Third Edition

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Contents

	Dedication	<i>ii–iii</i>
	Table of Contents	<i>vii</i>
	Foreword by <i>W. Edwards Deming</i>	<i>xi</i>
	Preface to the Third Edition	<i>xiii</i>
	Preface to the Second Edition	<i>xv</i>
	Preface to the First Edition	<i>xvii</i>
	About the Author	<i>xviii</i>
Chapter One	Two Approaches to Variation	1
	1.1 The Engineering Concept of Variation	2
	1.2 The Shewhart Concept of Variation	4
	1.3 Two Ways to Improve a Production Process	6
	1.4 Dr. W. Edwards Deming	7
	1.5 The Two Alternatives	11
	1.6 The Necessity of Process Behavior Charts	12
	1.7 The Uses of Shewhart’s Charts	18
Chapter Two	Summarizing Data	21
	2.1 Measures of Location	22
	2.2 Measures of Dispersion	24
	2.3 Histograms	27
	2.4 Stem and Leaf Plots	31
	2.5 Running Records	32
	2.6 Summary	33
Chapter Three	Shewhart’s Charts	37
	3.1 The Logic of Process Behavior Charts	37
	3.2 Using Subgroups to Monitor the Process	40
	3.3 Average and Range Charts	43
	3.4 Limits for Individual Values	46
	3.5 Other Charts for Subgrouped Data	47
	3.6 Process Behavior Charts with Subgroup Size One	48
	3.7 Choice of Scale for Process Behavior Charts	50
	3.8 When Is a Process Reasonably Predictable?	51
	3.9 Summary	52

Chapter Four	The Whys and Wherefores of Process Behavior Charts	55
	4.1 Charts Done Right	56
	4.2 Why Three Sigma Limits?	60
	4.3 What if the Data Are Not Normally Distributed?	65
	4.4 Myths about Shewhart's Charts	76
	4.5 Four Foundations for Shewhart's Charts	82
Chapter Five	Using Process Behavior Charts Effectively	89
	5.1 What Can Be Considered a Signal?	90
	5.2 The Western Electric Zone Tests	92
	5.3 Rational Subgrouping	100
	5.4 Questions regarding Data	112
Chapter Six	Capability, Predictability, and World Class Quality	117
	6.1 The Voice(s) of the Process	118
	6.2 Within-Subgroup versus Global Measures of Dispersion	124
	6.3 The Voice of the Customer	125
	6.4 The Capability Indexes	126
	6.5 The Performance Indexes	130
	6.6 Estimating the Fraction Nonconforming	136
	6.7 Converting Capabilities into Fractions Nonconforming	138
	6.8 The Myth of "Long-Term Capability"	139
	6.9 World Class Quality	144
Chapter Seven	Using Process Behavior Charts for Continual Improvement	151
	7.1 A Flowchart for Using Process Behavior Charts	151
	7.2 Continual Improvement	154
	7.3 But Will This Work in North America?	183
	7.4 Summary	187
Chapter Eight	Setting the Process Aim	191
	8.1 The Difference between Aim and Consistency	191
	8.2 The Necessity of Process Predictability	194
	8.3 Setting the Process Aim Using a Sequence of Values	194
	8.4 Setting the Process Aim Using Multiple Measurements	200
	8.5 Summary	204
Chapter Nine	Miscellaneous Topics	207
	9.1 Chunky Data	208
	9.2 Individual and Moving Range Charts Done Right	212
	9.3 When Should We Use an <i>XmR</i> Chart?	215
	9.4 Three-Way Charts	217
	9.5 Revising the Limits	221
	9.6 The Recalculation of Existing Limits	224
	9.7 The Nature of Assignable Causes and Common Causes	225
	9.8 The Origin of the Scale Factors	237

Chapter Ten	Charts for Count-Based Data	255
	10.1 A Simple Approach for All Count-Based Data	257
	10.2 Charts for Data Based on Binomial Counts	260
	10.3 Charts for Proportions Based on Binomial Counts	263
	10.4 Problems with Binomial Charts	268
	10.5 Charts for Data Based on Poisson Counts	271
	10.6 Charts for Nonconformities per Unit Area of Opportunity	275
	10.7 Summary	279
Chapter Eleven	Using Count Data Effectively	285
	11.1 Three Characteristics of Count Data	285
	11.2 Using Count Data Effectively	290
	11.3 Summary	305
	11.4 Afterword	306
Chapter Twelve	Getting Started	309
	12.1 Flowcharts	310
	12.2 Cause-and-Effect Diagrams	311
	12.3 Pareto Charts	316
	12.4 Summary	320
Chapter Thirteen	Further Topics	321
	13.1 Interpreting Skewness and Kurtosis	322
	13.2 Enumerative Studies versus Analytic Studies	329
	13.3 The Characterization of Product	331
	13.4 The Fallacy of Acceptance Sampling	340
	13.5 Interpreting the Results of Acceptance Sampling	342
	13.6 The Problem of Modified Control Limits	343
	13.7 The Transformation of Data	345
	13.8 The Effect of Variation on Balanced Systems	349
Appendices		353
	Glossary of Terms	353
	Glossary of Symbols	354
	Bibliography	357
	Answers to Exercises	359
	Tables	384
	Index	401

Preface to the Third Edition

In teaching out of the Second Edition, I became aware of certain sections that could be improved upon and other sections that were no longer of much use due to the increasing automation of the job of analyzing our data. The purpose of this edition is to amend these shortcomings. First of all, throughout the book I have updated the terminology. Rather than the emotionally charged terms “out-of-control” and “in-control” you will now find the more appropriate and descriptive terminology of “unpredictable” and “predictable.” Rather than the obscure “controlled variation” you will find the more descriptive “routine variation,” while in place of “uncontrolled variation” you will find “exceptional variation.” As you will find on page 6 these changes respect the idea behind Shewhart’s work without getting lost in his early Twentieth Century semantics.

In Chapter Five I have revised the explanation and illustrations of the Western Electric Zone Tests. Hopefully this treatment will be clearer and more informative than before.

Chapter Six has been completely rewritten. When the Second Edition was prepared the topic of process capability was surrounded by confusion due to a multiplicity of formulations. Since that time a certain amount of standardization has occurred for the formulas, although there still appears to be plenty of confusion regarding the interpretations of those formulas. Here I have tried to clarify both the interpretations and the relationships between the various Capability and Performance Indexes. Finally I have outlined and illustrated how these Capability and Performance Indexes can be converted directly into Effective Costs of Production and Use.

In Chapter Nine the sections on Moving Average Charts and Median Charts were dropped since virtually no one uses these techniques today. In their place I included a new section which examines the nature of data for clues to the roles played by Control Factors, Assignable Causes, and Common Causes.

Chapter Ten was slightly streamlined, with greater emphasis on the role of the XmR Chart with count data. One example in Chapter Eleven was expanded. And the section on the Transformation of Data in Chapter Thirteen was completely rewritten with a specific example and new graphs to illustrate the pointlessness of this common exercise.

Finally, along with a revised Bibliography, the tables were expanded to provide more explanatory material. In addition, test data sets are included, along with answers, for use in verification of the computations in software packages.

Hopefully these changes will be useful to all who seek to understand SPC.

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