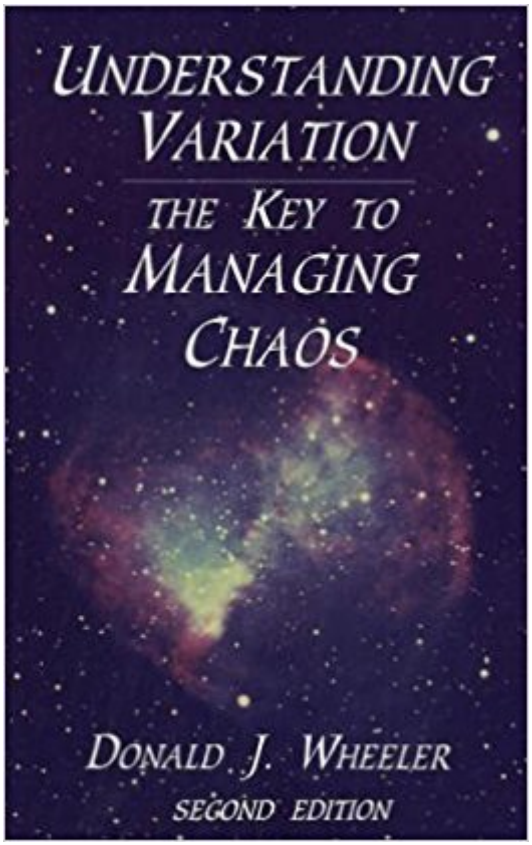
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# Understanding Variation: The Key To Managing Chaos




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## Synopsis

We live in the Information Age, and much of that information comes to us in the form of numbers. But before numerical information can be useful it must be analyzed, interpreted, and assimilated. Unfortunately, teaching the techniques for making sense of data has been neglected at all levels of our educational system. As a result, through our culture there is little appreciation of how to effectively use the volumes of data generated by both business and government. This book can remedy that situation. Readers report that this book as changed both the way they look a data and the very form their monthly reports. It has turned arguments about the numbers into a common understanding of what needs to be done about them. These techniques and benefits have been thoroughly proven in a wide variety of settings. Read this book and use the techniques to gain the benefits for your company.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Donald J. Wheeler has been actively planting the seeds of transformation in companies and organizations around the world for over 25 years. His classes have been credited with being the essential element in turning companies around and taking them from red ink to black. In less spectacular ways his seminars have been the foundation for establishing learning cultures within many organizations in various industries. Unlike so many classes where the emphasis is upon techniques, Dr. Wheeler’s classes go far beyond mere techniques to teaching the way of thinking needed to use those techniques effectively. He has worked with over 250 companies in chemical

processing, health care, medical equipment, information technology, steel and aluminum production, agribusiness, food production and processing, electronics, pulp and paper processing, automotive suppliers, government agencies, and banking. Dr. Wheeler has taught over 1000 seminars in the USA, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal, South Africa, Brazil and Malaysia. Over 60,000 students from the US and 32 countries on five continents have attended his seminars, which are held in Knoxville, Tennessee. Marketing research shows that word of mouth advertising brings in the majority of these students. We love it when our clients and students tell their friends and colleagues how good Dr. Wheeler's classes are! Along with his acclaimed seminars, Dr. Wheeler has also authored or coauthored twenty books which collectively form the definitive library for Discovery through Data Analysis. His books are being used throughout the US and in over 41 countries around the world. Dr. Wheeler has M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Statistics from Southern Methodist University. He taught at the University of Tennessee for 12 years where he was an Associate Professor of Statistics. He is a Fellow both the American Statistical Association and the American Society for Quality, and he was an associate of Dr. W. Edwards Deming until his death in 1993. In short, Dr. Wheeler is the internationally recognized expert on Data Analysis and SPC. He has the knowledge, the experience, and the ability to communicate that knowledge and experience to others. For more information on Dr. Wheeler's books and seminars, contact SPC Press at 800-545-8602.

This book is well written with great graphics (tables and charts) that illustrate main ideas and examples. It is moderate to difficult subject matter covered in such a way that makes for an easy read with necessary information to know for all decision-making professionals within an organization. The author provides real life examples where companies have analyzed data, completely missing or misinterpreting the clear signals the data was displaying causing the company unnecessary costs. Likewise, the author does a superb job at highlighting why behavior control charts are a mandatory and useful tool when analyzing data used for strategic decision-making. What is a behavior control chart you say? I recommend that you read this book.

Donald J. Wheeler's book is an excellent refresher for quality professionals. But, more importantly, is an effective and easily understood primer for managers of other functions--no previous statistical knowledge is required by the reader. The book demonstrates that "control charts" can be used to understand the outputs of a wide variety of processes. Wheeler provides a concise explanation of

control charts. He focuses on charts for individual values and moving ranges, XmR, to analyze numerical data, such as % of on-time shipments, % of premium freight, material costs, and total production costs. In only 155 pages he illuminates the principles and construction of "process behavior charts". No previous statistical knowledge is required and the book doesn't get bogged down in either statistics or mathematics--the focus is on understanding and interpreting data. By using data other than "product measurements" he demonstrates that the control chart can be used to interpret and understand the outputs of a wide variety of processes. A "must" read for every manager--in manufacturing or service industries.

Don Wheeler, former colleague of W. Edwards Deming, explains how VERY SIMPLE statistics can transform any business process.As a young boy in Tennessee, I sometimes uncovered "white lightning" (moonshine whiskey) hidden in forests. MIght his East Tennessee roots give Wheeler his rare sense of humor and fascination with how data and KPI's can be used to "cheat?"This book is very rich in actual examples of data being used to mislead as well as KPI's which actually promote THE OPPOSITE behavior intended.Wheeler takes the reader through multiple "cycles of learning" in this short read which is easily completed in under 2 hours on a flight. But be warned; once you read this book you will want to reread it and apply the lessons many times.Are your processes "predictable" or are they "unpredictable?" With his jargon free, reader friendly style, Wheeler explains clearly 3 kinds of "Voice of the Customer" specifications, as well as sharing multiple examples and pitfalls which leaders make converting data into knowledge.If you suffer from "rare" but important defects, be sure to read the next to last chapter. Brilliant!The cases on pages 86 and 131 will inspire you to gain new insights building on the easily understandable histograms.A must read for any Lean Six Sigma Executive, Sponsor or Belt. I buy this book in boxes of 10; I often find my colleagues and contacts asking to have my copy!

I wish economists and journalists and other leaders would read books like Understanding Variation by Donald Wheeler. Today the news is that unemployment claims went up, for the first time in 3 weeks. Analysts are now speculating that maybe the recovery is not as strong as it appears.Excuse me. What are you saying? Are you saying that one upward blip can be extrapolated into a trend? Are you saying that because we flipped a coin 3 times and got heads (unemployment going down), and now we got a tail (unemployment going up) that our coin is defective? Are you saying that because temperatures were warmer than usual last week that we won't have winter?One data point does not make a trend. We can't say the recovery is soft unless we know what the normal variation

is on the out-of-work claims from week to week. Any result from week to week is going to be up or down (like heads or tails). Just because it goes up doesn't mean that a trend has reversed, when we didn't have a significant trend in the first place. 3 weeks of claims going down, analogous to coin flipping, could happen 1 in 8 times. The chance of it going down a fourth time is 1 in 16, unless there's a change in the system that creates unemployment claims (or better, creates jobs). Until we get to the odds of 1 in 64 (6 weeks in a row in the same direction--or some say, 1 in 256 is less risky for identifying a false trend) we can't say that we had an unemployment trend at all.Please, Mr/Ms Economist and Mr/Ms Journalist, don't get confused and become Chicken Little thinking the economic sky is falling based on one piece of data that was going to show up normally. Read Wheeler's book to better understand all this.

I really loved this book. It explains the thought process behind SPC without a lot of the mathematical notation that usually accompanies this subject. That said, it shouldn't be the only book you read about SPC, a good textbook on operations management or an introduction text to SPC should also be read. The value in this book is that it helps round out and fill out your knowledge about how and why SPC should be used. Also valuable in the book is how to interpret the SPC graphs, and how to "read" a control chart and translate the zig-zag lines into plain English. Very worthwhile for non-technical business people.

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