



Bruce Miyashita, VP Six Sigma, (right) took part in a charity fundraiser with cyclist Lance Armstrong.



Lance Armstrong uses Six Sigma concepts in his approach to cycling.

## Cycling adventures with Lance Armstrong

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**Bruce** Miyashita, VP Six Sigma, met the ultimate Black Belt last fall. While Lance Armstrong, champion cyclist, cancer survivor and philanthropist, may not hold the title of Black Belt technically, his approach to cycling uses the Six Sigma concept. Bruce was thrilled to have the opportunity to ride with Lance.

"Lance's story is something I often use in training – how he admits he was a gifted athlete, but never worked and prepared as much as he should have. It took a near-death experience with cancer to change his attitude," Bruce said. "As a result, he became the ultimate advocate of applying a measurement-intensive, scientific

approach to his preparation. He really exemplifies, for me, the idea of Six Sigma thinking boosting personal performance and helping people realize their potential."

Last September, Lance returned to the Calgary, Alberta area for the third time in 24 months to help the Tour of Courage Society, a Calgary-based charity. Bruce was among 30 philanthropists who donated to the charity and were rewarded with a two-day ride with Lance.

Bruce's involvement in the event was a natural progression for someone who lives and breathes Six Sigma and who also loves sports such as cycling. For example, Bruce completed a personal Green Belt project in late 2003 to help improve his overall health. He monitored many health factors such as caloric intake. By using a measured scientific approach (the DMAIC methodology), he lost 25 pounds and improved critical to quality (CTQ) factors such as his cholesterol and blood sugar levels. "I believe that you have to

take charge of your own health," he said.

Lance Armstrong's battle with testicular cancer in 1996 also taught Bruce how each person is empowered through knowledge and action. The Lance Armstrong Foundation's mission statement includes the belief that "knowledge is power and attitude is everything".

"I've always had a keen interest in cycling, for the fitness aspect, plus its use of numbers and data – for example, tracking times," Bruce explained. Lance has a similar scientific approach. Referred to as the "Millimetre Man," he's constantly measuring how much he eats, the weight of his equipment and even the alignment of his body and bike in different wind conditions.

For Bruce, the event was a win-win-win. He was able to do something he loves in the incredible Canadian Rockies, ride with arguably the best cyclist in the world and donate to a worthy charity.



"The focus of the fund-raising was to create a research chair to examine the links between exercise and the prevention and treatment of cancer. I really believe that this is something we have to understand better," Bruce explained.

The ride was split into two days, covering about 130 kilometres on the first day from Lake Louise to the Columbia Icefield. At the highest point, they reached 2,000 metres above sea level. Their hard work was rewarded with a celebratory dinner at the landmark Post Hotel.

Bruce was able to spend time talking with the seven-time Tour de France

champion, learning that Lance was familiar with Six Sigma. A restaurant he co-owns is named The Sixth, relating both to his sixth win of the Tour de France and his approval of the Six Sigma process. "Lance ... reads a lot on business and was familiar with Six Sigma through articles and books. I gave him a copy of our Six Sigma Q&A DVD and brochure. He asked a lot of detailed questions. He's like a sponge," Bruce added.

"He also talked about the questions reporters kept asking him, such as what he could possibly do in life that would be as challenging as riding the Tour de France. He said he tells them, 'What

about trying to help cure cancer?' and that shuts them up pretty quick."

When the cyclists crossed the ceremonial finish line, they had raised the final \$1 million needed for the \$6-million Lance Armstrong Endowed Chair in Molecular Cancer Epidemiology. "It is something I'll never forget," Bruce said.

After a leg injury heals, Bruce will be ready to ride again. "I'm going to launch another Green Belt project to build up my cycling performance. Who knows, next year I might beat Lance with a surprise attack on Highway 1A!"