



Quality Improvement through People A Practical Approach

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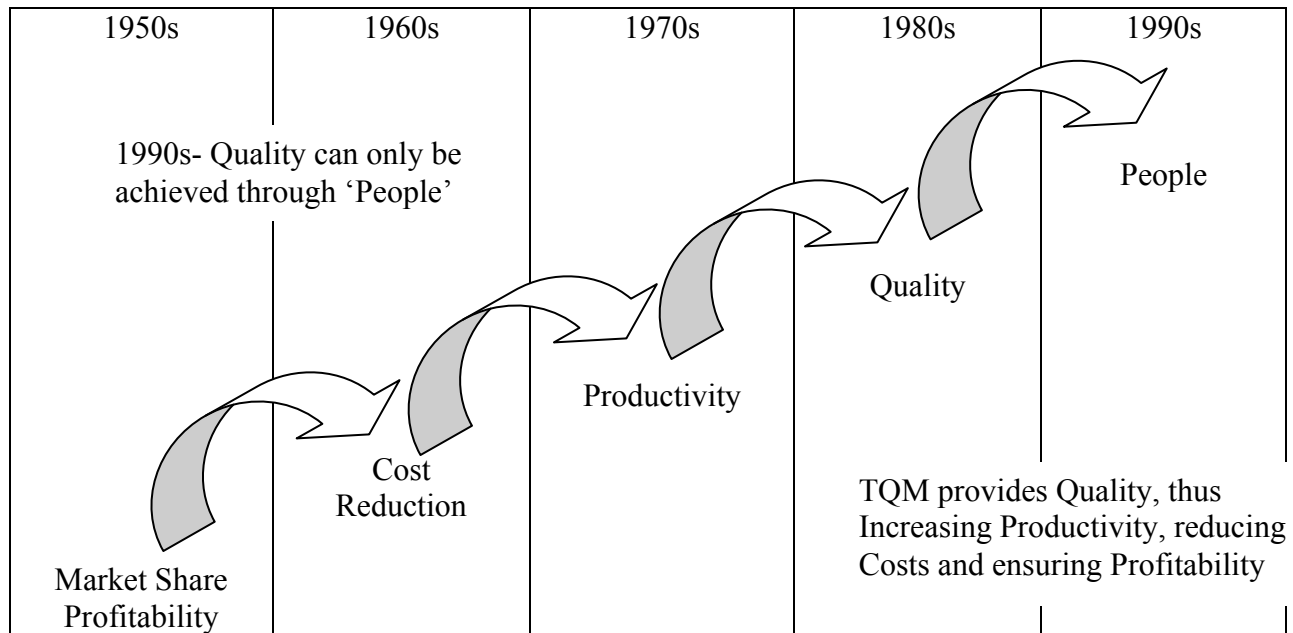
When President Clinton was campaigning for re-election, the political slogan ‘It’s the economy, stupid’ became famous. Today, there is an equivalent slogan that applies to quality where you substitute ‘the people’ for ‘the economy’ - and it’s obvious why when one thinks about the importance of people to any endeavor/organization. People are a fundamental component, a “natural resource” if you will, that lies within a successful, well- developed quality organization. Take away the people, and the organization is worth nothing. Take away the motivation, commitment and ability of people in organization to work together in organized teams seeking quality improvement, and again, the organization is nothing. Conversely, inspire the people to work well, creatively, and productively, and the organization can achieve anything.

It is appropriate here to note the passing of Joseph Juran, a seminal figure in the history of quality management. He died 28 February 2008 at the amazing age of 103. Juran not only taught the Japanese about quality management; he also arguably was the first quality expert to emphasize that no quality management system works unless the people in it are empowered and commit to take responsibility for quality as their ongoing process – effectively, quality must then become part of individual behavior and personal attitudes – it must be an ethos.

In the 1950s, world trade was in total disarray following the Second World War. The 1950s became the decade of booming markets. Those countries whose industries survived the war girded their industrial loins rightly and sought to meet the ever-increasing demands of that market. The main aim was to capture and hold on to part of this booming market. Make it and ship it! Make it and ship it! There was little time to consider the finer things in life, such as accuracy, quality or even what would happen tomorrow. The times were exciting. Industry was being rebuilt, while at the same time, each company was learning how to cope with unprecedented demand and meet it.

In the 1960s, the balloon reached full expansion, growth declined, and markets stabilized. The 1960s became a time of re-assessment as additional markets were not immediately available. Profits were not made just from expansion. There was little expanded revenue, money had to be saved. The major concern of industrial management during the 1960s was to reduce costs. Thus, it was then that the Japanese moved into full-scale production and started to export, particularly in the automotive sector. The Datsun became a familiar sight on British roads.

A crisis began to loom in the 1970s. Economic downturn was now a reality. People even began to speak of recession. People were spending more than industry was earning. Fundamental management errors continued. Decisions were still based on numbers, on results, and short-term results at that. Any real consideration of Quality was a lower order of concern. Even in those few companies with any Quality input at all, Quality was treated the same way. Quality was numbers-based and basically only a question of sorting the good from the bad production to ensure that production targets were met.



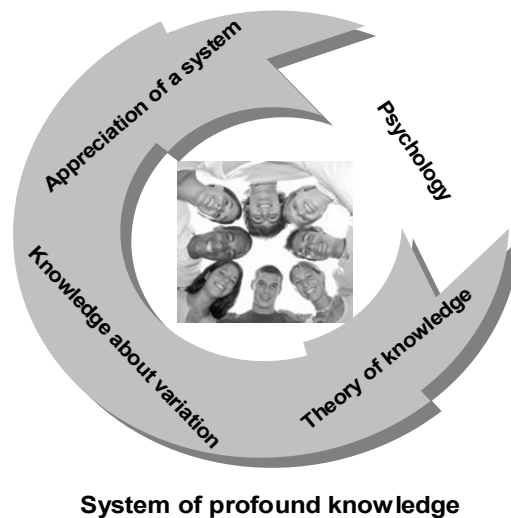
Evolution of the Quality Function

Meanwhile in the East, a different path was followed. With the help of Western consultants, the Japanese car industry, followed by the electronic segment of that economy and other industrial sectors, fully grasped the importance of Quality. Dr W Edwards Deming, an industrial consultant, who had suffered frustration within the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, instructed the Japanese on the important considerations of Quality. His 14 points for Management became the basis of the Japanese industrial revival. In Japan, Quality was now the central issue and the central goal.

In 1980s, the recession finally arrived, and many companies went under. Those that didn't file for liquidation realized that something basic was wrong. Many turned to Quality. Quality began to be the subject of conversations, and the "right" slogan, and the needed solution. Many companies reinforced their Quality Assurance departments and turned to stronger inspection methods. Some entities were even considered to be modern theoretical Quality methodology, such as statistical Process Control (SPC) and Just-in-Time (JIT). People like Philip Crosby in the United States emphasized that a Total Quality approach was necessary for success. A different form of management was necessary and a new way of doing business was essential to meet the different challenges of different times.

The 1990s was typified by the enhancement of work. It became increasingly obvious that continued success was only possible by harnessing the full potential of each and every person within a company.

Deming now set aside his famous 14 points for Management, which had formed the structure of his earlier book, *Out of the Crisis* (Deming, 1986). His new writing was built on the four pillars of his 'system of profound knowledge'. There were no conflicting differences between the two texts, but clearly, a list of four essential components was more easily remembered than a directive of 14. His four pillars of profound knowledge were:



1. Appreciation of a system
2. Knowledge about variation
3. Theory of knowledge
4. Psychology

The above list is expressed in Dr Deming's own words. If you have ever studied systems engineering, you may be pleased by Deming's suggestion that all managers need 'an appreciation for a system'. For the many managers who had not yet embarked on such studies, Deming offered a consoling thought namely, that 'one need not be eminent in any part of profound knowledge in order to understand it and apply it'.

Second, when Deming indicated that every manager should have ‘knowledge about variation’, he was recommending that you should study the techniques available for quality improvement. Knowledge of these techniques can help you to reduce variations in your products and services to the benefit of your customers. This knowledge will let you appreciate what can reasonably be expected from people in an organization working within the process.

Third, the theory of knowledge concerns the way people learn and their use of scientific method to gain a clearer understanding of process. Quality improvement and cost reduction come from process improvement that originates with increased knowledge by people about the nature of process relationships. This TQM culture must be a strong learning curve.

Fourth, by listing psychology as the final pillar of profound knowledge, Deming reminds us that every employee can make an important and unique contribution to customer satisfaction and company profitability. Thus, a basic understanding of human motivation is essential for all managers to have, but perhaps more importantly, actually apply. A further reason for extending this joint study to include quality processes is provided by the obvious difficulty of separating the contributions of the individual from the contributions of other elements, in the process. These elements are the human needs in terms of keeping the team satisfied in terms of recognition, sense of satisfaction to get the job done and intimately meeting the organization’s strategy.

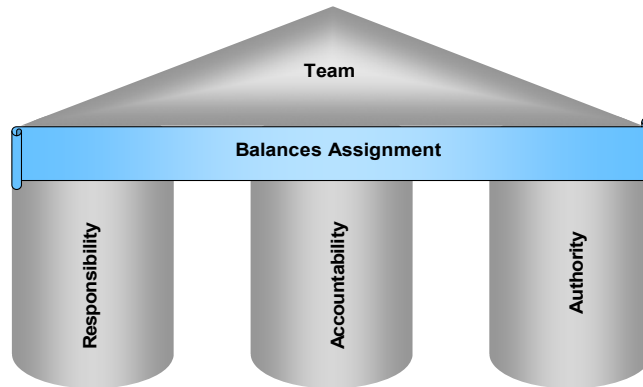
So, it is quite evident that Total Quality Management (TQM) is concerned with people, process, and performance. But it is equally important to understand that TQM also focuses on communication, commitment, co-operation, and company culture. These are the key factors for people to succeed. Further, this management concept is characterized by leadership, learning and long- term objectives. Strong leadership with clear vision aligns the team’s mission towards the common focused goal and it becomes easy to lead the teams.

Some describe a picture of keen and enthusiastic people joining together without any thought of status or company politics, completely happy and confident in the knowledge that their future is assured by their own tight personal control over their own activities within a Quality- oriented company. Most who hear such a description consider it to be an ideal, a dream as it were. Some even revert to the stock ‘put-downs’ such as ‘cloud cuckoo land’, or ‘cloud nine’. For most companies, the concept may be a dream, but it is actually a dream that can increasingly become more of a reality in a real world. Quality is a direction because it gives clear vision and direction aligned with the customer needs. The task of senior management is to decide on the direction, and also the values on which that direction is based. The ingredients of the dream are logical. They are also economically sound. *Problems result from an inability, firstly, to create such an environment, and then to manage and continue it.*

By concentrating on the management of people, management can narrow the gap between the desirable and the possible. A finite number of people are involved with the company. The larger the number, the greater the challenge, and that challenge thus is a problem. However, it nevertheless remains a containable problem. The bigger the company, the larger the scale of resources that is available to assist the cultural change. This is positive because the resources are available to implement the change in all areas.

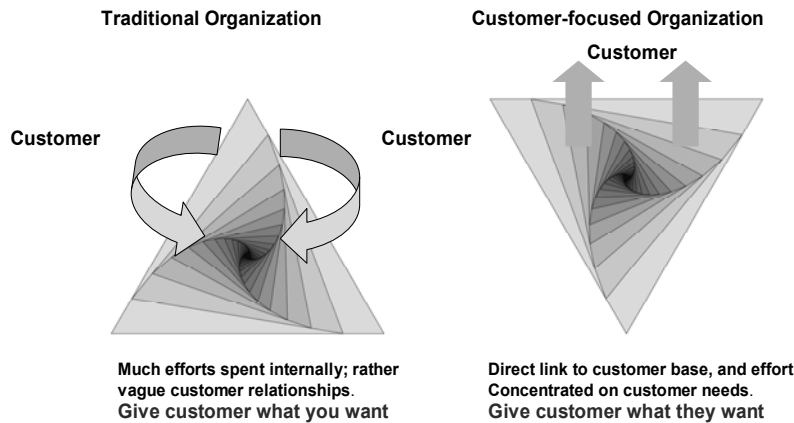
A Practical Approach.....

From such past experiences, management has learned that Quality is indeed the central issue. Currently, there are efforts given to the Lean methodology and Six Sigma process variation improvement to minimize waste, control variations in process, and move toward zero defects by realizing that Quality can only be achieved through the successful management of people. The Quality system, which stems from a Quality policy and a Quality Plan, is essential, but it will only have validity within Quality relationships. New definite meanings for terms have to be commonly understood. In particular the concepts of ‘accountability’ and ‘responsibility’ need to be clearly delivered. They are different and should not be confused; without any ‘authority’, they are like a three- leg stool without one of its legs and cannot be successful.



TEAM EMPOWERMENT

A more sensible way to be in business and be successful is to structure the entire business organization to meet the needs of the customer. Everyone in such a customer-focused Organization needs to participate fully in these customer relationships to focus on customer requirements; and to satisfy the customer needs, there is no other activity. The company is structured to put the customer at the top of the agenda, with power coming from the customer service that is provided at all points. Rather than having a large part of the Organization’s energies going into ‘control’ mechanisms, which then lead to an attempt to control the customer and provide internal innovative products without any feedback from the customers, an educated and motivated workforce simply becomes dedicated to ‘serve the customer. In this process, the whole organization first works to understand the customers’ needs and then aligns internal innovation and other development functions (design, color management, comfort, performance enhancement, etc.) to deliver what the customer wants. The whole organization evolves around the needs of the customer based on the feedback coming from the market.



Customer focus Organization

People are important element in fulfilling the customer needs; understanding and developing the products to deliver the market demand. When they see the current economic situation, people on the shop floor' remain disappointed because of the current layoffs and the economic situation. It is true that they are now treated with more respect, but this change is little consolation to those recently made redundant. Cynics have remarked that restructuring is now executed more quickly and with even greater secrecy than it was before total quality was introduced. Undoubtedly, a number of managers have changed their attitude toward their staff and the growth of teamwork has led to more openness. We can only talk about teamwork and getting the job done in teams of experts' being assigned tasks in their related expertise, supervised by a strong leader , so the task is completed on time and at or under budget. In this process, people management skills that keep the team highly motivated encourage creativity and innovation to differentiate the products in the targeted market against the competition by creating value for their customers and ultimately consumers.

The basic unit of a well-organized Organization is the team. That team consists of a small group of people who share joint responsibility for their activities and contributions to the Organization. These teams can be developed at all levels, all departments, and applied to big or small strategic initiatives. To be successful as a practical approach, each team member should be held accountable for the team's responsibility and the assignment cycle should be completed with full authority to get the job done. Where people are working together, but there is no sense of sharing the responsibility for activity, that group is but a group of people and nothing more. It is a disservice to the concept of teamwork to refer to such a group as a team.

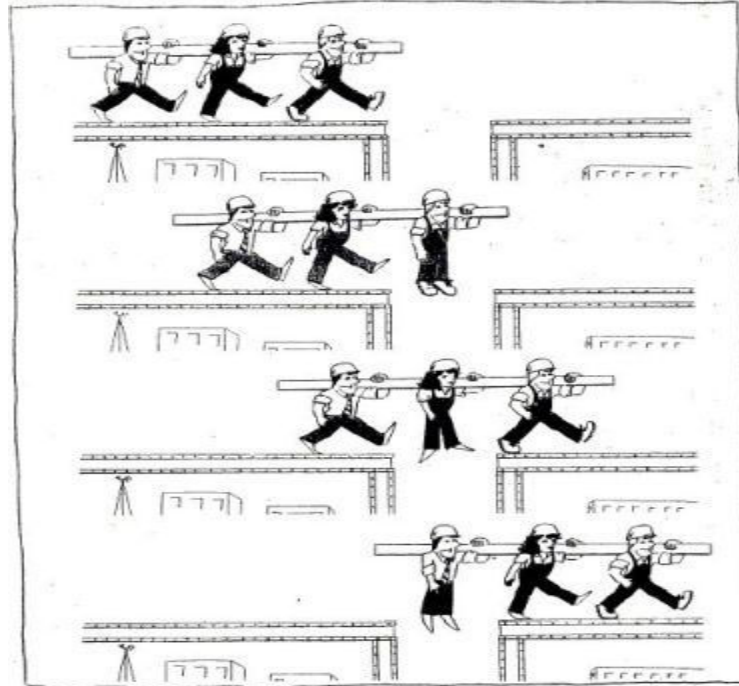
Before a team is established, the manager retains the decision-making power. The team is brought together and trained. It negotiates what responsibilities it will shoulder and develops its

own infrastructure. At some point, however, it has to be given its head that is, given the space and the opportunity to succeed or sometimes to fail. Until that moment, that team not taking responsibility for its own affairs and direction.

Teams do allow an easy management style, with one manager being responsible for several teams, rather than a larger number of individuals in those teams. Good managers develop an easy relationship with a team, delegating as much responsibility as the team appears able to handle. *The manager should 'own'; the failure of each individual he/she manages, while allowing that person to succeed and "own "that success".* A well- oriented, motivated and able team will require little attention, leaving the manager free to concentrate on a team that is not functioning well. Teamwork that operates well produces efficient management. People need recognition for their work, but it is easier to recognize team effort. The team can share praise and appreciation. While in the large organization many opportunities for reassurance, or reinforcement, are missed, in a team situation, team members can give immediate recognition to another member of the team. Mutual appreciation and respect are valuable commodities and more valuable within a successful team.

Processes are controlled better by teams than by individuals. The team members can apply a joint effort at the time and place demanded by the process. The process receives control when it needs it. A team can service its own manpower needs, ensuring consistency and constant attention. Teamwork allows a work rotation pattern, or other such formal devices, that best suits the people on the team. Thus, their efforts are maximized. The team that organizes their own work will integrate the needs of the organization and the needs of each team member, producing the most efficient working environment for the entire team. By sharing activity, calling on each other as and when necessary, a team can organize and achieve the best results. A team can also share its successes and failures more easily with effective communication.

TEAMWORK



Not only does teamwork require a structure able to offer the clarity but also a clear redefinition of roles and relationships becomes vital. Nothing is left to chance. Managers are not left to develop their own role in life or their own individualistic relationships with their subordinates. Everyone understands his/her role within the organization intent to supply Quality. The structure of the organization will be geared to serve customers. Senior Managers will ensure long-term opportunities for customer needs by developing the right markets, products, and services, and the ability of the organization to meet these challenges.

Effective teamwork is essential for an organization to realize its high-performance potential. Team Builders Worldwide has worked inside hundreds of organizations and offers solutions for the classic challenges associated with team and leadership dynamics. We have seen that Winning teams set realistic, attainable goals. Once their goals (objectives) are reached, they set new goals. Winners also need to be challenged. There needs to be team awareness and communication. Team members must be aware what is happening around them as it relates to the team's overall game plan. That awareness involves a perception of how the individuals on the team are doing. For an athlete that might be how they are doing in class, on the court, and in their dealings with other entities. Communication is a two-way street. A team that communicates together is more likely to do

A practical approach is working in teams. Successful teams are disciplined teams. They are committed. They are willing to do Whatever It Takes, to help the team achieve its goals. Their commitment must be legal, moral, and ethical. Their individual goals are secondary, however, to the goals of the team. It has been learned that any task can be achieved, beginning with explanation of the mission to issue resolution through using a team concept and most importantly, through people involvement.

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