



TenStep Supplemental Paper

13 December 2006

The PDCA Cycle of Systematic Development

PDCA is an acronym for PLAN, DO, CHECK and ACT. It is a very simple, easy-to-use and highly effective means of managing anything and everything!

The PDCA cycle is also known as the Deming Cycle, or the Deming wheel of continuous improvement spiral. Its origins can be traced back to the eminent statistics expert Walter A. Shewart. In the 1920s, he introduced the concept of PLAN, DO and SEE.

The late Total Quality Management (TQM) guru and renowned statistician Edward W. Deming modified the Shewart cycle as: PLAN, DO, STUDY, and ACT.

Along with the other well-known American quality guru J.M. Juran, Deming went to Japan as part of the allied occupation forces after World War II. Deming taught a lot of Quality Improvement methods to the Japanese, including the use of statistics and the PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT cycle.

The subsequent impact on Japanese industry, business and government is now a part of business history and well-documented internationally.

The Japanese modified Deming's coinage of PLAN, DO, STUDY and ACT to the present-day, universally accepted PDCA acronym for systematic management.

Moreover, many companies in Japan, the United States, Europe and India have already proven beyond doubt the practical, sustained business benefits accruing from this simple and effective method.

Another compelling reason for the use of PDCA is that it can easily be tried out (there is no financial cost, only mental and physical efforts are required!) and practiced at any level and magnitude, and the obvious advantages can be tasted through a test-recipe before ordering the full course!

PDCA has varied applications. A few are listed below:

1. The daily routine management of the individual and/or the team
2. Problem-solving processes
3. Project management
4. Continuous development
5. Vendor development
6. Human resources development
7. New product development
8. Process trials

Belief in PDCA, coupled with diligent application, will ensure successful implementation. Unlike most other management concepts and jargons, the PDCA concept



TenStep Supplemental Paper

is used by all, knowingly or unknowingly, in their own unique ways. The simplest domestic example is the shopping list made by a housewife. In a business environment, the simplest example is the written or unwritten plan made by every individual, at the start of a new day.

However, the important question is: Do we implement this known method of systematic management consistently, at all times?

All of us plan most of our activities, and we certainly implement most of these plans, at least in part (this is the DO portion of PDCA). However, do we review (CHECK) our implementation of the plan often and with ruthless thoroughness? Even if we have done the reviews and reached a conclusion, do we ACT on this information in an effective and timely manner?

The PDCA methodology of Systematic Management is part of any Total Quality Management Program for the simple reason that the answers to the two questions in the previous paragraph are not satisfactory in most business organizations.

Try it out by maintaining a daily PDCA logbook for ten days. It is almost guaranteed that you will become a firm believer and lifetime user of PDCA.