



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Total Quality Management

ISO 9001, ISO 9004, JRD QV...standards for excellence! Why do companies aspire to acquire the ISO certificate? What sets ISO certified companies apart?

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Practically every management author, consultant or practitioner has a different meaning for it. However, to put it simply TQM is an organizational strategy with accompanying techniques that deliver quality products and services to customers.

The concept of TQM is based on the following principles:

‘T’- Total

The ‘T’ of TQM places an organization in a new perspective. TQM is far different from the traditional inspection, quality control or quality assurance approach. It is a strategy formulated by the top management and diffused throughout the organization. TQM demands the involvement of all personnel in the organization, right from the CEO to the lowest-paid hourly worker and clerk.

TQM encompasses the external end user, purchaser and internal customer, outside supplier and support personnel.

‘Q’- Quality

In TQM, quality does not mean no-defect products, but much more. It concerns itself with quality “service”. This stems from the growing importance of the service sector, which does not produce any tangible items, per se. In other words, even a goods-producing company becomes service oriented, under the TQM approach.

Quality is, thus, defined in TQM as meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Standards are benchmarked by the customer and not by the organization, the manager or the quality control department. The challenge in the TQM approach lies in delivering quality for all customers, as quality is a relative concept and varies from customer to customer.

‘M’- Management

TQM, of course, is a management approach and not just a narrow quality control or quality assurance function. Ideally, the TQM manager should be from any department other than the ‘quality control function’. This would add a new perspective to the function. Moreover, he should also be someone who is respected, a good communicator and a doer. He should be a strong advocate and believer in TQM and report directly to the General Manager/CEO.

A trainer of other employees in TQM, the TQM manager should always remember to involve the entire organization in this unique exercise. The onus is on him to make TQM, a people-oriented management approach.

Elements of TQM

For an organization to survive in this ‘dog eat dog’ competitive world, it needs to adopt TQM. The five elements of which are:

1. Communication

Communication is an integral part of our daily tasks without which our day is incomplete. Likewise, within an organization communication is essential to keep the production process in order. Without proper communication channels, an organization is bound to get into a bottleneck of chaos, where there is no coordination between departments. This, in turn, brings the production to a grinding halt.

What is communication? It can be defined as the transfer of ideas, between the sender and the receiver for better understanding. For TQM to be a success, all employees must be believers in the message of total quality management. The manager must have open channels of communication for employees to exchange information about the TQM process. The managers must make certain that the TQM philosophy percolates down to all levels.

Types of Communication

Downward communication is probably the dominant form of communication in a business. The best way to send the TQM message through downward communication is by presentations and discussions. This will help managers to make sure that everybody understands the message. It will also clarify the manager’s commitment to the TQM process and overcome objections.

Upward communication is also an important factor in TQM. This is the only way by which subordinate employees can air their views and suggestions on TQM to the management. Upward communication helps the manager and the management to adopt corrective measures to tough situations that may be a result of TQM.

Lateral communication is also a must for TQM. It breaks down barriers between departments and fosters a more professional attitude in employees to deal with customers and suppliers.

Different types of communications enable each employee to be well informed about the philosophy of TQM.

2. Training

Training is the second key element for the success of TQM. It is very important to boost employees’ productivity. Managers are responsible for coaching employees, which enable them to deal better with TQM, namely interpersonal skills, the ability to function within teams, problem solving and decision-making, job management, performance analysis and improvement, business economics and technical skills.



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Phased training is required for the successful implementation of TQM. It should entail a comprehensive understanding of TQM concepts and methodologies to ascertain that employees emerge better-equipped and more effective to handle enhanced quality standards.

3. Teamwork

Teamwork, the third element for the success of TQM, helps business receive quicker and better solutions to problems. Teams provide more lasting improvements in processes and operations.

There are three types of teams that organizations can adopt for the TQM process.

Quality Improvement Team or Excellence Teams are temporary teams created to deal with specific problems. They are set up for periods of three to twelve months and then disbanded once the task has been accomplished. People from the middle and upper management levels and engineers are members of such teams.

Problem Solving Teams (PST) are also temporary teams that solve certain problems, and also identify and overcome causes of the problems. These teams too are dissolved after the solution has been met. They generally last from one week to three months. These teams may also be cross-functional and may be located at multi-sites.

Natural Work Teams (NWT) believe in concepts like employee involvement, self-managing and quality circles. These teams are permanent and are generally composed of people who naturally work together. NWT consists of small groups of skilled workers who share tasks and responsibilities. Usually, these groups are departments, but also could involve people from different departments who work together. They work one to two hours a week to ensure the completion of tasks.

Any of these teams can give managers the needed edge to ensure that TQM is a success at the workplace.

4. Leadership

Leadership, a key factor, in TQM requires the manager to be an inspiring visionary and provide strategic directions to instill values in subordinates. A manager must formulate objectives or targets, share expertise and knowledge and ensure that employees have sufficient experience, training and knowledge to carry the TQM process forward.

The best leader is one who is committed to the service of his employees'. He must set an example to his employees. Before the manager becomes committed he must be convicted.

How? He must understand TQM, believe in it and then demonstrate his belief and commitment through their daily practices of TQM. He must ensure that the strategies, philosophies, values and goals filter down throughout the organization to provide focus, clarity and direction. This should be done through policy deployment, a process through which goals and the action plans are consistent with the top-level corporate mission, strategic guidelines and objectives.



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5. Recognition

Recognition for suggestions and achievement is important. It can be of many levels and be granted at different times. Public recognition of performance is necessary and can take the form of plaques, holidays or even thank you notes on the intranet. The greatest impact of recognition can be seen when it follows an action immediately.

Conclusion

Thus effective communication and training combined with right leadership that recognizes and rewards team play will ensure the success of TQM and the organization.