



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### The Quality Circle

The HR Quality Circle (QC) constitutes a group of departmental heads who volunteer to spend time outside of their regular office hours to help solve departmental quality problems. The HR Quality Circle movement originated in Japan and has grown at a phenomenal pace. There are at least 10,000 such QCs in Japan. The following are the characteristics of QCs:

- The membership of QCs consists of employees at the lower rung of the company as well as supervisors
- Membership to QCs is voluntary
- The work of the QCs is mostly conducted outside of regular hours
- Compensation for this out-of-hours work varies from full time down to nothing

To understand how a QC works it is necessary to study the movement because of its built in measuring stick. It is a fact that this has been done without pre-empting the time of the managers and engineers, who remain free to devote themselves to inter-departmental and upper level projects. How Japanese companies found a way of going through all operations with a fine toothcomb without further adding to the burdens of managers and engineers is something to ponder on.

The main effect of HR Quality Circle has been in control, this being inherently the basic role, which can be played by the Circle. Part of the improvement has been an increased awareness of the sequence of steps in the control cycle. As quality improvements are worked out, action is taken to incorporate the improvement into revised, standardized methods. Further steps are then taken to set up the foolproof, the feedback and the alarms.

Apart from the improvement of control, a gratifying proportion of the projects are of a breakthrough nature. By systematic study, they take the department to higher levels of performance, levels not previously attained.

The QCs are a very logical outcome of the Japanese drive for training and accomplishment in quality control. The Japanese were not content to conduct this training for engineers and the supervisory levels. Their concepts of organizing work do not follow the strict concept of division of work. Instead, the Japanese leave a good deal of planning and creativity to be carried out by the production force.

With the training behind them, the HR Quality Circles identify a problem to be solved, tackle it and solve it. They then tackle another, and another. The record of successful internal solutions encourages other Circles within the same company, and the movement spreads. As the number of Circles in one company grows, there arise new opportunities for stimulating interest and action. Companies organize in-house conferences of their HR Quality Circles, providing opportunity for publicizing results and for giving recognition to the Circles who achieved the results.



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The QC movement can be characterized as a brilliant achievement in management leadership. Various fields in India, including IT and manufacturing, have successfully adapted the QC concept.