



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Get Excited About Quality!**

The way employees feel about quality reveals how motivated they are about it in their work. The extremes in their reaction can range from rock solid resistance to plain unstoppable enthusiasm. Most realistic reactions, however, can best be described as passive compliance. Maybe it is time for quality to be moved from being something to be complied with to something to be enthusiastic about.

The problem is not that companies are ignorant of tools and principles to improve quality. Companies have been aware of the new and evolving principles in quality such as Deming's Principle, TQM and Six Sigma. Many companies realize that to compete successfully, they will have to move down a path to implement these types of programs. The problem is that quality is not something that gets people excited. It is viewed more as something to be lived with -like taking an insurance policy or studying for an exam. People know that it is good and needs to be taken care of, but it is not something they get thrilled about.

#### **Quality Can be Boring**

Can quality be made more motivating and inspiring? Unfortunately it is not easy. People are motivated to do something positive, not just to avoid mistakes. They are motivated to do something new and creative, and to add value. The primary aim of quality management is to avoid defects, adhere to limits and meet specifications. No wonder it fails to generate enthusiasm.

As long as quality is viewed as an end in itself, it will fail to motivate. In order to motivate, employees will have to look beyond quality. They will have to see the purpose for which quality is needed. Beyond passing the quality control tests, beyond meeting process specifications, quality has one purpose and that is *to provide customer value*.

Providing customer value is one thing that few people can question. Every employee has been a customer, and they know what it means to have a great customer experience and a poor one. It is the one thing they can identify with.

#### **Energizing Quality**

The question of how to make a quality product can easily be answered. The question of how to get the customer to purchase your products instead of the competitions is much harder to answer. Providing more value through higher quality opens up new opportunities and challenges. It implies understanding the customer and their needs. It requires you to understand the options available to your customer from competitors, new entrants and new technologies. Some of these challenges in the marketplace and in customer expectations could even make your products irrelevant.

This market challenge requires everyone in the organization, not just the sales and service personnel, to be focused on customer quality and value. The quality should meet (if not exceed) the customers' needs, wants and expectations. Of course, this is easier said than



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done. It is challenging and therefore inspiring. The challenge of providing the customer more quality and value should draw out employee enthusiasm and involvement.

### **Taking Action**

How then, can organizations make all employees customer focused? First, by continually reminding them that providing the customer maximum value is the chief goal of the organization. Make sure employees are aware of who the ultimate customer is and what 'quality' and 'value' means to them. When employees see the connection between their actions and the customer experience, they should begin to change their approach to their work, especially in terms of how they perceive quality and value. Challenge them to seek new ways to provide incremental value and quality. When your employees generate good ideas, implement them. This will inspire more employees to generate more ideas.

The effects of getting employees to focus on quality can be remarkable, and can take your business to new levels of excellence. If you can inspire enthusiasm for quality as well, your company can forge ahead of your competition.