



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Quality Management Can Help You Recover from a Disaster

The purpose of a quality management (QM) is to improve product or process performance to better meet customer expectations. It is meant to help companies get ahead of the competition and gain market share. Quality management has also been highly touted as a way to gain access to foreign markets, such as the European Union, by providing a way to meet different standards. However, a company that practices quality management will also be better prepared in an equally crucial function – Disaster Recovery.

The vulnerabilities of businesses to disaster, both natural and man-made, have become especially evident in the last few years. The September 11th attack on the World Trade Center was the most prominent disaster to hit the business world in recent times. Some companies managed to survive the disaster and get back on their feet within a few days. However, many others were never able to fully recover and must struggle just to stay afloat. Some of these companies were even forced to close down completely.

The companies that successfully survive a disaster are those that have proactively planned for disaster scenarios. By making an effort to determine the most critical aspects of their operations, they are able to make preparations for any possible setback. If disaster does strike, they can put their plans into action. On the other hand, companies that fail to effectively prepare for potential disaster can face serious consequences.

A company Quality Management Plan (QMP) can play a crucial role in helping an organization survive a disaster. Consider the case of a major bank in New York that survived the September 11th attacks. According to a quality professional in that bank, the discipline that came with the implementation of ISO 9000 actually helped them during the crisis.

A QMP can help an organization survive a disaster in the following ways.

- A company QMP requires all procedures and activities to be properly documented and followed. These procedures are followed in normal times to build a quality product. This documentation of procedures and processes is extremely helpful in times of disaster. The documented procedures act as a blueprint after a disaster, laying out exactly how things were done in the past and leading the company back to normal operations.
- Every business must identify the skills and procedures that its employees must follow in day-to-day operations. A QMP requires businesses to identify these skills / procedures and provide appropriate training to its employees. An organization following the QMS constantly identifies necessary skills based on the changing needs of the organization and provides the required training. Thus, the organization gains experience in quickly adapting to changing business needs and can utilize this experience in times of crisis. It is able to quickly identify the necessary changes in



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procedures, communicate them to the employees, and provide additional training if necessary.

- For any business, it is important for process metrics to be linked to the business' performance. With a well-developed system of connecting the process to the business performance, the organization can easily keep track of how well it is performing. The same principle helps the organization to evaluate its progress during a disaster period.
- A QMP requires the organization to formulate a quality policy. This quality policy, which specifically states the organization's mission and values, makes the employees aware of what is expected of them in their daily work. When a disaster strikes, employees may become so overwhelmed with handling the crisis that they neglect their everyday work and lose sight of simple business goals. A well-formulated quality policy can help them remember to continue their normal tasks, even during hard times.
- A QMP puts principles into place that make individual employees more accountable and responsible for their actions. These principles are employed in everyday work and will eventually become like second nature to the employees. If a crisis does occur, this attitude will carry over and help to ensure that employees maintain a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Disaster may only strike once, but once can be enough to change the course of a business. Therefore, organizations should have a disaster management plan in place. Disaster planning often requires the organization to brainstorm every possible setback and to formulate a plan to tackle each of these situations. Important documents, designs, etc. need to be kept in safe off-site locations. The organizations should have the right people assigned to take over critical functions if necessary. Also, preset recovery deadlines and schedules might need to be decided upon and followed in case of disaster.

Preparing for a disaster goes far beyond implementing a company Quality Management Plan. However, following a QMP can bring the necessary discipline that will help the organization plan for and successfully recover from a disaster.