



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Sustaining Total Quality

Has your organization run out of vision and impetus after traversing part of the TQM journey?

Key Learnings:

- Recognize the critical features of Total Quality Management (TQM) implementation
- Review the common barriers to sustaining TQM efforts
- Recognize the important facts that help sustain TQM initiatives
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- Recognize the important facts that help sustain TQM initiatives

This situation is common in many organizations in today's business world. An organization is under pressure to survive and grow amidst fierce competition and tough customer demands. The CEO suddenly decides that implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) is the solution for all problems.

He puts the Quality Head in charge, who, with his limited authority, initiates measures based on inputs from TQM companies. The measures include Statistical Process Control (SPC) training for plant employees, software and terminals for shop-floor data capture and calibration hardware. All these generated monthly reports, but the management took no action.

One year later, the CEO was shocked that the business scenario had worsened and profits were down. Finding that TQM led to more expenses and little improvements, the CEO concluded TQM was not for his organization. He stopped the initiative.

Now, everyone would first blame the Quality Head for not doing a good job, right? Wrong, for one person alone cannot take complete responsibility for TQM and bring about miraculous and instantaneous improvements.

Why is it that TQM efforts are abandoned even before they begin to take roots?

Wrong notions!

TQM is not just about tools, training programs, data systems, suggestion boxes, team meetings, or winning an award. Books and training can provide complete information about the tools. Consultants can guide the development of TQM, but they cannot nurture and sustain TQM. Having the latest gadgets, computers, books, consultations or training in TQM does not guarantee success.

The problem is that despite being a common term, TQM is not a fixed set of steps to success. The essence of TQM differs markedly from organization to organization based on its culture and mindset.



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The core principles of TQM encourage business practices that enhance product/service quality, increase productivity, reduce costs and enhance customer satisfaction. The critical features of TQM include leadership, role and involvement of employees, middle management role, training and education, rewards and recognition.

Teamwork, policy strategies, resource management, communication management, self-assessment, quality control techniques, organizational climate and culture of continuous improvement and innovation are also important.

To go on and on...Now, with so many issues to be taken care of, TQM implementation is not a simple task. Just as there are several success stories of TQM, several organizations have failed in their implementations and have abandoned their efforts. Some common causes for failures include design and implementation failures, poorly planned management policies and non-conducive organizational culture and structure.

This explains why, despite recognizing the importances of TQM, many organizations hesitate to implement it. Moreover, successful implementation is not all; the most difficult aspect is to sustain TQM practices in the long run.

TQM continuity and sustainability are achieved only when quality consciousness and continuous improvement are integrated into an organization's day-to-day activities.

The barriers!

A TQM sustainability study revealed what several organizations considered to be the most difficult aspects of TQM efforts. They include:

- Keeping the process going despite changes in leadership/management
- Accepting the slow rate of implementation
- Understanding TQM principles and educating everyone in the organization
- Becoming motivated about the process
- Working as a team productively
- Overcoming skepticism of employees and motivating them
- Finding the time required
- Keeping everyone informed about progress as well as setbacks
- Overcoming employees' feelings that their positions were threatened by the process
- Obtaining the necessary resources

Most of these problems arise mainly because organizations follow others without checking if the ideas and steps would suit their environment. It is essential to tailor TQM initiatives to an organization's individual needs by analyzing its technology histories and backgrounds. Another important aspect to be considered is the workforce, which often comprises people from different cultures.



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Basic characteristics of the organization, its culture and environment affect the implementation of TQM. The drive to implement and sustain TQM, therefore, has to be managed based on individual organizational conditions.

The 'right' vision

For this, any TQM initiative should have a vision. Most organizations start off with a finely worded vision statement, which alone is insufficient. What is more important is whether top management has agreed to and underwritten every word. Now this also implies that only the executive team has to be 'living the vision' or 'walking the talk'. The crucial issue is whether everybody in the organization is equally inspired by the vision - and, most important, enthusiastic.

A vision is of little use unless it embodies effective strategies and leads to efficient execution. Progress towards the vision arises from measuring meticulously where any operation is now and plotting how it can be improved. Then the organization goes on improving. Remember, continuous improvement is really an unspoken part of the vision.

TQM practitioners say successful, continuous efforts do not result from just the vision statement, but require personal commitment of everybody.

Remember, to sustain TQM, the vision has to be focused on results. These should be results that will take a particular organization forward into a better and brighter future. Many vision statements fall at this hurdle and this leads to half-completed TQM initiatives.

Successful organizations like Honeywell UK and Rank Xerox say it is important to focus on work to turn vision into action. Measurement, meetings, training, tools, techniques, and the like make TQM initiatives total in the true sense.

The employee angle

The extent of employee participation in TQM initiatives goes a long way in determining their success in the long run. TQM researchers cite several factors embedded in the organizational system that may enhance or hinder employees' participation. Individual training and project involvement, job characteristics, organizational structure and social support influence employees' extra-role behaviors like in continuous quality improvement activities

Remember, enriched job characteristics are positively associated with employees' TQM practices. The more enriched job characteristics, the more likely voluntary involvement of employees in TQM practices. There is a world of difference between voluntary and forced participation of employees in TQM.

When forced to participate, employees develop negative impressions and think of TQM as increased workload. Consequently, no amount of training or projects can improve their willingness to practice TQM.

To avoid this, a flat organizational structure with less rigid boundaries among divisions is preferred generally in nurturing a TQM culture. A low management control organization

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yields more power to employees giving them more control of their jobs and responsibilities for tasks. This empowerment is consistent with TQM principles. Less management control also increases the flexibility to adapt to a changing environment.

TQM is not a fixed set of steps!

Organizations need to remember that TQM is not a fixed set of steps that come 'ready to use' on a platter. TQM must be home-grown. It can be compared to a seed that needs to be planted properly to take root. Then it has to be nurtured continually and sustained for the life of the organization.

TQM requires a cultural change. It is an ongoing dedication to continuous improvement in every aspect of the business, involving all stakeholders. Practitioners describe TQM as a philosophy of work-life, a business-oriented, almost religious striving to be the best.

Implementing TQM practices in any company is a long-term commitment requiring careful planning and a lot of time and effort. Being partly philosophical and partly practice oriented, TQM requires knowledge of techniques for collecting and analyzing relevant data to provide solutions to enhance competitive advantage of an organization.

Moreover, introduction and implementation of TQM is not as big a challenge as sustaining the initiatives to achieve intended benefits. The factors that enable sustainability are subtly different from those of successful implementation and this causes a dilemma.

On a national level

Today, national governments are increasingly playing an active role in promoting and encouraging organizations to embrace TQM. Many countries have established national quality awards or business excellence awards for organizations successful in sustaining TQM practices.

The premier award in US is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award while in UK, there is UK Quality Award. Europe has European Quality Award (EQA) and Japan, the birthplace of Deming Award, also launched Japan Quality Award. More recently, Singapore and the Philippines have also established their own national quality awards.

All these awards promote quality awareness, recognize quality achievements of companies and provide a platform for sharing quality management initiatives. They use a framework with criteria to check for evidence of a continuous improvement philosophy. The checks cover innovative approaches, appropriate deployment of these approaches and a long-term trend of operational, financial and customer satisfaction results.

Gathering the essence

It is a fact that one organization alone will not have all the solutions to sustaining TQM practices. Different organizations have different core values and TQM practices. Hence, an attempt was made to capture best practices in TQM that ensure its sustainability.

Based on Singapore Quality Awards (SQA) criteria, a matrix of core values and sustained, sophisticated TQM practices was created during a research project. The inputs



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came from four leading SQA winners: Texas Instruments, Baxter Healthcare, Phillips Tuner Factory and PSA Corporation based in Singapore.

These organizations provided valuable insights into the best practices that help to promote core values and ultimately achieve business excellence. The matrix framework encourages organizations to adhere to the most fundamental of all quality concepts, the Deming cycle. The concept of Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA) ensures organizations improve on their initiatives continuously.

The matrix is more of a guideline and is generic in its applications.

<i>Core Values</i>	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Do</i>	<i>Check</i>	<i>Act</i>
Visionary leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company-wide quality participation Top management visibility and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEO-headed quality steering committee Vision and mission statements Open door policy Regular interaction with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 360 degree feedback Leadership assessment Internal quality awards Active participation rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality training for everyone Maintain top management commitment
Valuing people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team work Empowerment Expand employee autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality control circles Staff suggestion schemes Work improvement teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual employee surveys No. of suggestions/ cost reduction as indicators Internal quality awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team management & teamwork training Recognition (certificates/ gifts/ plaques) - Rewards (cash/non-cash)
Customer driven quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in customer complaints Achieve total customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer response center Customer day Customer satisfaction teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of complaints, rejects, warranty costs as indicator Referrals, repeats and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inculcating listening skills Capturing correct information Handling

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			<p>churn as indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer surveys 	<p>irate customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer management training
Agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle time reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrent engineering/JIT • Benchmarking for process improvements • Use of electronic data interchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product design cycle time and lead time as indicators • Internal quality awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant elimination of wastes
Valuing partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve supplier cycle time and quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier development and awards • Information sharing • Database access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier quality and delivery performance as indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide benchmark comparisons between several suppliers • Supplier training and involvement
Systems perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting long and short term goals proactively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning process • SWOT analysis • Cascade goals to all levels of the organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent (semi-annual or quarterly) • goal achievement audits • Actual vs. goal gap as indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remedial action to close gaps between actual performance and goals
Results orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting customer requirements • Defect reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving customers/suppliers in design • Concurrent engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer feedback, design cycle time and production yield rate as indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve cross functional communications

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six Sigma • Design for manufacture/ assembly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control charts 	
Social responsibility	<p><i>To be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the environment • Of assistance to community • Informative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling, greening of environment, community services • Fund raising/ green initiatives • Assistance to local schools • Industrial attachments for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste reduction, monetary donations, green projects as indicators • Internal awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety training • Environmental awareness training
Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring organization performance in terms of corporate goals and targets • Well designed information system structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive comparisons • Setting key performance indicators • Use information technology to gather data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review usefulness of performance indicators • Internal quality awards • System audit (integrity/security/access) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Mining • Drop or add performance indicators as required • Encourage use of MIS, DSS,
Continuous learning and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage creativity • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity teams • Benchmarking (mostly internal) • Competitive comparisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost reduction/no. of suggestions as indicator • Cycle time/productivity gains as indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewards/ awards for improvement efforts • Organization-wide training in quality tools



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Now we look at how to apply the model. Say an organization aims at the core value 'customer driven quality'. As per the matrix, it should first establish goals for the core values. Say it aims to attain a 98 percent customer satisfaction rating in three years.

With this goal, the organization can refer the 'plan' phase in the matrix for best practices. These need not be followed exactly but can be considered as viable initiatives to plan for the goal.

After planning, the organization can focus on 'do' phase and refer to the possible best practices from the matrix. Say it can choose one day (monthly, quarterly or annually) as customer day for interactions and celebrations with customers.

Upon completing 'do' phase, the organization focuses on 'check' phase. In this phase it adopts initiatives that monitor efficiently the effectiveness of the initiatives implemented in the previous phase. Say, it can use specific performance metrics to measure effectiveness of initiatives, like figures of complaints, rejects or lost customers.

Once the mechanisms to evaluate the initiatives implemented are in place, the organization can focus on 'act' phase. Here the emphasis is to improve upon initiatives continuously, using information from performance metrics as a gauge for further improvement. After this phase, the organization has to establish review cycles and check if the trend for indicators is positive

The matrix provides a guiding structure for organizations to implement sustainable TQM systematically. It ensures TQM initiatives target a specific purpose, like striving for a set of universal core values fundamental for business excellence.

TQM sustainability largely depends on transformational change, having critical factors in place to achieve key objectives. These goals are superior performance, a culture of continuous improvement and learning and using a balanced perspective.

A TQM commitment is serious business. Plan seriously, implement thoughtfully, support it and improve continuously and celebrate successes frequently. TQM, once planned and started, is a continuous journey with no end. With not enough time for implementing TQM, where is the time for non-productive TQM? So you just cannot afford to let up anywhere, anyhow, or for any length of time and take a break!!