



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Total Quality Management Requires Employee Involvement

Total Quality Management (TQM) success depends on employees, so organizations need to have a plan to successfully get employees involved. The plan needs to take into account the current organizational culture, the barriers to gaining employee involvement and specific steps for overcoming these barriers. This information helps the organization choose between various options for getting the employees involved.

There are many ways to gather input on organizational culture and barriers to success. These include interviews, focus groups, observation, attitude surveys, etc. Depending on the capabilities of the organization, this work can be done internally, or you can hire outside experts to assist in gathering the information.

Other aspects of an employee involvement program include:

- **Communication:** Management must communicate its goals for achieving employee involvement. For instance, giving rewards and publishing accomplishments in employee newsletters can both improve employee participation.
- **Training:** Managers and employees need to be trained in necessary skills such as teamwork, group leadership, providing feedback, and problem solving.
- **Ongoing evaluation and feedback:** This includes evaluating and monitoring employee participation in the quality program, and making changes to the plan based on the resulting metrics.

Key Components of an Employee Involvement Program

Employee involvement is critical to the success of your quality program. However, not all quality programs that use employee involvement succeed. A common shortcoming is for an organization to rely on a pre-packaged employee involvement program that does not take into account the specific culture and needs of its own organization. To be successful, the employee involvement program should include the following steps.

- Assess the organization's present culture, attitudes, structure, systems, and barriers to the desired change (Current State Assessment).
- Develop a vision statement for the future (Future State)
- Work with the management to design an employee involvement program, based on moving from your current state to the future, desired state.
- Establish specific goals and objectives for employee involvement
- Communicate these goals and objectives to all employees on a consistent and regular basis
- Provide expertise, when needed, through consulting, coaching and facilitation



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- Train employees in teamwork, problem-solving and other group skills to identify and solve problems
- Monitor the plan on an ongoing basis to ensure that the program is working. The metrics will help to determine if the program is being implemented as desired and whether the desired results are being achieved

Metrics are Needed to Monitor the Move from Current State to Future State

In most organizations, getting employees involved required a change in how people perform their jobs. In general, people tend to resist changes that threaten their authority and their traditional work routine. The first step in the employee involvement program must therefore be to understand the existing attitudes, cultures, and practices in an organization. Analysis is needed to identify the current levels of employee involvement and the reasons for this level. Metrics need to be identified to provide an indication of the level of employee involvement. The environment then needs to be monitored to identify whether the current involvement level is moving toward the desired state.

The data collected can also be used to assess the training needs of employees. If the organization fails to identify current employee skills, knowledge, and management style, it may end up providing them with unnecessary training, while the critical training needs of employees might be neglected. This may render a quality improvement program ineffective.

Management is another important organizational resource. It is therefore essential to assess management capabilities during the initial assessment. An employee involvement program normally requires a change in organizational culture, and the success or failure of culture change initiatives ultimately rests on the management hierarchy.

Summary

For an organization to successfully implement a Total Quality Management program, employees must be involved and committed for the long run. If employees are able to put quality inputs into the product, the result will be quality output for the customer.