

The "How To Of Quality

Quality is a standard by which we judge our work. It measures whether we did what we set out to do and is the standard by which customers measure products or services. To establish quality guidelines, a CEO must have a starting point and some no non-sense criteria. A quality program must also be fun and rewarding to get employee support. This article presents a "break through" strategy by presenting a "How To" method to help CEO's and employees establish and meet simple, effective quality standards.

Because quality is not an object like a football, it is harder to identify. However, you can fairly easily identify individual components of quality within your company:

Identify and Solve Problems. Quality is based on problem prevention. You can only prevent a problem only when you understand the process. Perfection Standard (P.S.) is the means for preventing problems. First, find the problem; second, identify problems by their effects; third, check through the effects of the cause; fifth, correct the source cause; sixth, reinforce P.S. to assure prevention in the future; and finally recheck to make sure the problem has not reoccurred.

Assure customer satisfaction. The first, truest test of quality is whether a product or service meets your customers' requirements. The payoff for P.S. comes from a customer's trust that a product or service has been, and will continue to be, reliable over a long period of time. Encourage your customers to complain. Make it easy to complain. Listen to the complaint carefully, and make sure complaints reach the right people within your company. Act quickly and in good faith to solve the problem -- if defective, products should be replaced immediately, without charge. Finally, take positive steps to prevent recurrence.

Measure results. Everything is measurable through observation or quantitative analysis. In your company you need exact and accountable measurement. The first step in measuring results is to collect information to see where you stand. You must decide: What to measure; When to measure; Tools for measuring; and Remember when you measure.

Reward quality performance. Don't you just love getting things? It's nice to get presents for Christmas, Hanukkah or birthdays. Rewarding employees for success in quality reinforces the kind of quality behavior that you need and want for your company. To keep the good behavior going you must establish a formal or casual reward system. The important key points: Decide **what** behavior you want to reward; decide **when** you want to reward the

behavior; and decide **how** to reward that behavior.

Set up quality groups. There are a number of structures used in quality-conscious companies to support their commitment to quality. You may wish to establish Quality Circles. These are groups of employees who meet to proactively establish plans and ideas to encourage a quality based company.

Provide quality training. Training can focus on current skill needs or future development. Personal and work quality will project attitudes, skills, opinions, and values that have been learned over time. It's important to remember to tie all training to your Company objectives. Get input from management and those being trained. Check to see if specific objectives are being met. Look for on-the-job applications of the training skills. Never portray training as a luxury; and last but most important, never start cutting costs by cutting quality training.

Assess the cost of quality. How much does quality cost? It is imperative to quantify and continually evaluate the price you pay for quality now and the price you would pay if you put a new or more rigorous quality program in place (or, conversely, applied *less* exacting quality standards). After it is in place you need to continually evaluate costs in order to monitor the program.

Establish your quality program. As an experienced CEO you have probably seen various quality programs in action sometime in your executive career. Some have failed and some have worked. Here are some important points for establishing a quality program: First, have an overall plan in writing; second, get commitment and support throughout your company; third, provide education and training; fourth, provide tools and materials where quality can be cost effective; fifth, get participation and involvement; sixth, set measurements and indicators; and seventh, provide rewards and incentives.

Support your quality program. Your employees want to do a quality job. However, a formal quality program takes time and energy. You, as the CEO, and your key management need to create "alot of noise" to show your support and encouragement. To ensure cost effective quality you need to "talk the talk and walk the walk."

Make quality work. You can make quality work by following the steps above. The steps don't have to be complicated or time intensive but need to thoughtfully reviewed and implement. Someone needs to be the "owner" or "leader" for your quality program.

As the CEO, **YOU** are responsible to make the high impact difference in your company for bring high standards and quality in your products and services to your company.

