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Why Quality Efforts Fail

Five potential reasons:

1. Vague or inaccurate perceptions of what quality means. If quality is perceived as merely meeting technical specifications or doing good repair work, only mediocre results will be achieved. Quality must be perceived as managing for excellence in all operations.

2. A lack of solid commitment and backing by top management. Low or wavering commitment of energy and support will scuttle even the best-conceived improvement effort. This condition often stems from a poor understanding of quality's role in all corporate functions.

3. Treating quality improvement as just another temporary program with a lot of slogans and banners. Top management's lack of commitment is obvious in this situation. Department managers and supervisors will view it as yet another onerous task to add to their already full plate. Token participation is all that is evoked.

4. No acknowledgment of the required cultural change. Total quality control represents a tough revolution in management. It is management based on respect for humanity. As such, it demands new ways of thinking and working. People will naturally resist changing their perception of what their job is.

5. Executives' belief that a high level of quality can be achieved merely with new techniques and devices, a few statistical charts, etc. Although advanced methods and process control technology are important for quality, they alone will not suffice.

Build A Better Supplier-Customer Relationship

A better customer-supplier relationship offers a powerful opportunity to improve quality and reduce costs. Quality can be managed only when customers and suppliers are partners. The improvement process is established primarily by the customer and must be based on mutual respect, trust, and benefit.

The problem is that customers commonly have treated their suppliers as adversaries. The customer supplied the specifications, schedules, and payment while the supplier found a way to meet the customer's demands.

Bids for materials were often solicited on a continuous or semi-continuous basis; contracts were awarded on the basis of price and schedule, with some consideration, perhaps, for quality. With this scenario, there was no real need for a customer to interact with a supplier as the supplier might change the next time bids were solicited. Each party would press for short-term advantages.

6 steps forward to a better supplier-customer relationship:

- Build a trusting relationship
- Establish clearly understood requirements
- Select suppliers capable of conformance
- Be serious about conformance
- Develop a system of measurement
- Make sure each nonconformance is correct

We will elaborate on each of these points in future issues of *Process Quality News*.

Solve Customers' Problems With Flair

Respect and concern for customers is especially important when trying to solve their problems. When something goes wrong, a company should acknowledge its error, apologize, and fix it immediately while the customer is still there.

A customer that receives an elegant solution to a problem is more likely to pass on favourable comments about the company than a customer who never had a problem at all.

When a mistake happens, the company should recover with such flair that the customer remembers not the error, but the treatment after the mistake. This is what will transform an angry customer into a loyal one.

A study found that 63% of all dissatisfied customers will never do business with an offending company again. But if a company resolves the problems, 90% of those dissatisfied customers will remain loyal to the supplier.