

Invited Guest Editorial

“Global Quality Management without Boundaries”

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It is a great pleasure to share some of my views on *Global Quality Management without Boundaries*. At the heart of global quality management are the topics of employee well-being and satisfaction, customer delight, process simplification and continuous improvement leading to enhanced operational and financial performance. Let us examine each of the major building blocks of these topics: the voice of the employee, the voice of the customer and the voice of the process (Vora, 2002).

Voice of the Employee: When you treat your employees as internal customers and learn to gather their requirements, expectations and satisfaction, you can set up internal processes to satisfy them. Their well-being, participation, motivation and satisfaction are critical for the success of your enterprise in a global economy. In excellent organizations around the world that are implementing quality management practices, a clear link have been established where employee satisfaction is a pre-requisite to achieving customer satisfaction. In the 21st century, you have to manage and treat employees as “knowledge workers”. If you do not treat them well, they will find other places to share their specific knowledge. You should treat each employee as a human being first rather than an expendable cost item. Be sure to recruit the best people for their talents and train them for skills and experience (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). Set clear expectations for each employee by defining the right outcomes. Remember Norman Vincent Peale’s observations: “*We tend to get what we expect*”, and “*When we affirm big, believe big, big things happen*” (Anderson and McKee, 1990). Learn to motivate your employees by focusing on their strengths (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001). Continue to develop your employee by imparting superior skills through education and training, meaningful feedback and coaching so they find a “right fit” in your organization. After all, if you take care of your people, they will take care of your customers. Instill in your employees a clear message of internal cooperation with an utmost focus on satisfying and exceeding external customer needs, requirements and expectations.

Voice of the Customer: For external customers, you must determine their needs, requirements and expectations up front before building your products or services. Learn to utilize the listening posts concept whereby you get multiple customers’ input in as close to real-time as possible (Vora, 2002). Also properly understand cultural preferences for your products/services based on geo-physical necessities of your customers. Make it easy for your customers to contact you and give them an opportunity to let you know what they think of your products and services. Create simple processes to gather input from your customers, and analyze multiple customer inputs to prioritize a few critical areas where improvement is necessary. Also, learn to appreciate areas where you receive

positive feedback from customers. In those areas, manage to hold the gains. Then engage the right internal resources to work on critical customer areas leading to sustainable solutions. Do not forget to continuously dialogue with your customers to keep them aware of critical areas you are working on and what the results are. If you keep your customers informed, they will appreciate your efforts and will provide you positive feedback in the next cycle. They will recommend you to others as well as repurchase from you. It pays to really take care of your customer's critical issues, as it costs 5-7 times more to find new customers compared to retaining your own customers. Learn to add value throughout your organization with the single focus of meeting and exceeding your customers' needs, requirements and expectations.

Voice of the Process: If you take care of your employees, they will use their creativity, talents and positive energy to baseline your processes, simplify them and continually improve them. Expose all your employees to concepts of continuous improvement, problem solving and group dynamics to achieve process improvement. Quality management can best be accomplished through process management and teamwork. Encourage your employees to work together in appropriate teams to simplify processes and solve customer issues. Manage your processes through a few but meaningful and effective metrics (AT&T, 1988). Engage your entire organization from top to bottom to apply process improvement focus in everything they do. This effort will eliminate waste from your processes and will lead to more profitable organization. Learn the best practices from within and outside your own organization through benchmarking efforts. Adapt and adopt the new learnings as applicable in your organization. Learn to appreciate the United States Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winners' practices of *Steal ideas shamelessly, however, must give credit to the idea originator, and In God we trust; everyone else, please bring the Data.*

Leadership: To achieve global quality management it is absolutely essential to have enlightened leadership throughout your organization. The current economic climate, coupled with large organizations being investigated for unethical business practices has focused attention on the most important core value from your leaders – Total Ethical Management. The leadership must walk the walk and talk the talk. Then and only then, the rest of the organization will follow the ethical management practices. One can learn from inspiring leaders such as Dr. Stephen Covey from the Covey Institute (Covey, 1991 and 1989) and Robert Galvin from Motorola, Inc. for their world-class quality leadership contributions.

Best-in-class organizations around the world have experienced excellent operational and financial performance by focusing on voice of the employee, voice of the customer and voice of the process through enlightened leadership.

According to the late John F. Kennedy, "*For of those to whom much is given, much is required*". This is especially true of all of us working in the quality management field. From my travels through four continents, I am convinced that in the quality management field, we have the right philosophy and necessary tools to make the entire world a better place. To do this effectively, we all need to be life-long learners and teachers. As a volunteer, start out with your own family, organizations, school districts, hospitals and local governments to reach out and touch every human being around the globe by sharing the message of quality management. Remember, Mother Teresa aptly said, "*We can do no great things, only small things with great love*" (Anderson and McKee, 1990). We are the torchbearers of quality management knowledge and the whole world is counting on us.

In summary, if we all put our creative energy together in applying quality management on a global basis, we can leave a lasting legacy of sustained business enterprises through optimal use of resources, people welfare and sustainable environmental practices for generations to come.

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