



HUMAN RESOURCES PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE

THE QUALITY DEBATE

Dr. Earl Starr, director of Simcon and an Associate of The Fundamentals Training Centre, enthusiastically explains that in the quest to make our products and services globally competitive, we have to be clear about what we mean when we refer to 'quality'. There is no single definition and philosophers from Aristotle to Henry Ford had their own take on the meaning of this concept. Have a look at these interesting quotations which reveal the multi-faceted views out there:

"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skilful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives." - William A. Foster

"Quality is free. It's not a gift, but it's free. The 'unquality' things are what cost money." - Philip B. Crosby

"Quality is everyone's responsibility." - W. E. Deming

"Quality is doing the right thing when no one is looking." - Henry Ford

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence (quality), therefore, is not an act, but a habit" - Aristotle (300BC)

Dr. Starr points us to two definitions of quality which are as follows: *"Conformance to a set of product and process specifications"* and *"Meeting the customer's expectations/requirements, first time, every time"*. Therefore it is critical, he explains, that we understand the divergences that are found between:

"The customer's expectation of the product or service quality and the customer's perception (or experience) of the product or service quality once delivered."

This often plays itself out by the company having to seriously consider:

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| Expectation | { | 1. Management's concept of the product or service quality and the staff's understanding of that quality standard |
| | | 2. The company's standard (or specification) of quality and the customer's own expectation of quality (in their view translated as a 'quality specification' for the product or service) |
| Experience | { | 3. The actual delivered quality of the product or service against the company's specification of quality |
| | | 4. The quality for that product or service experienced by the customer measured against his/her pre-conceived expectation of quality. |

This discussion underpins the drive towards a quality management system for that company and to obtaining the minimum standards set by the International Standards Organisation (ISO). Therefore, an important question is: *What is the cost of quality?*

But perhaps, more importantly, we should be asking: *What is the cost of poor quality?*

Undoubtedly there are links between 'quality', 'performance' and 'management'. Our next article will explore these links in greater detail.

In its work with the Human Resource Portfolio Committee, The Fundamentals Training Centre has resolved to continue to assist with raising awareness on the 'quality' requirements of ISO. We believe that it is through an in-depth understanding and reflection on our experiences around these critical ideas that we can empower ourselves and our companies to indeed be more competitive globally. Hence we are convening an information session on *The Importance of ISO* on 31 July 2013 at the Chamber's offices. Book your seat now with Romilda Williams. She is also keen to receive any contributions, questions, queries and/or inputs you may have on these topics.

Noel Daniels

Vice-Chairperson: Human Resource Portfolio Committee

Managing Director: The Fundamentals Training Centre

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