



NEW CULTURE CAN TRANSLATE INTO BETTER SERVICE FOR ALL

Memo: Quality at Work

Edition: Final

The last two decades have seen organizations of all types wrestle with the dynamics of deregulation and its impact on quality and customers. Most companies will agree that they are approaching an era in which survival is less certain than in the past.

Quality has taken on new meanings. Companies must now introduce new products and services quickly and with attributes that make the individual customer feel special. The old "one shoe fits all" approach will not suffice. Customization of products and services is becoming a must in order to attract and retain customers.

The difference won't make a difference if the difference is the same. That is, companies must be able to clearly differentiate their service and product features in a way that will excite the consumer. A "me too" attitude will not be sufficient, given the choices that customers have when it comes to selecting products and services.

It is important to understand that, in most cases, we have moved from a providers (supplier) dominated market to one controlled by the customer or the consumer. Sure, we still have pockets of producers that operate in close to a monopoly. But, the numbers of companies that are protected by monopolistic characteristics are fast decreasing.

Companies in the utility industry, governmental and educational organizations are now facing some form of de-regulations. As consumers become well educated, the hype of advertisement will have a diminishing influence in the purchase of products and services.

Both situations, de-regulation and consumer awareness, will require an organizational culture change. New concepts in leadership and employee involvement will become necessary in order to accommodate the high performance work environments that deliver expected quality levels.

The work environment of the future breaks with the traditional Tayloristic system that has been used by most organizations. No longer will a small minority be able to direct the many business functions that must operate with ever increasing precision to bring about effectiveness and efficiency.

All employees, especially those on the front line, will be required to exercise their judgment and make on the spot decisions to deliver the level of services that will be needed to ensure customer satisfaction and delight. Well-trained employees at all levels in the organization will perform many of the tasks that have been traditionally reserved for supervisors and managers.



The new roles of the front-line people, those closest to the customer, will require training and retraining. The individuals who are in direct contact with the customer will become comfortable with their new levels of responsibility. The "I just work here" mentality will now be replaced with "the buck stops here." This new thinking by empowered and well-trained employees will almost certainly ensure world-class competitiveness.

The reduced layers of management and an empowered workforce will translate into unprecedented levels of service to the customer. People who once issued directives will become comfortable with their roles as facilitators, coaches and team players. Their primary responsibility will be to make sure that the front-line people have what they need for a quick response to customers.

Employee morale will increase as the corporate culture positions only the customer before them in the hierarchy. Every employee in these world-class organizations will have "KASH." That is, they will have the Knowledge, Attitude, Skills and Habits that are needed in a high performance work environment. The essence of the transformation will be a true flip of the organization's pyramid.

In short, drastic changes will take place in the way organizations of the future work. High performance teams will emerge as an imperative for survival. As companies reorganize and downsize, and, as all people in the company are trained to work in the new environment; unprecedented levels of quality and customer service will be the results.

As our nation improves its quality and productivity, we will find that there are more than enough opportunities out there for all of us. Prosperity will be more likely than unlikely if Nigeria can transform itself to allow all individuals the opportunity to be educated and trained to make contributions.

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