



QUALITY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS HELP WITH COMPETITION

Memo: Quality at Work

Edition: Final

Now that Total Quality Management awareness and acceptance has increased, businesses are becoming concerned with the rate of implementation and improvement. Indication of the widespread application of quality-related activities can be seen globally. Businesses around the world are viewing Total Quality as a strategy to achieving world-class competitiveness.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) has moved on establishing standards to ensure minimum common quality practices as a prerequisite for doing business in international markets. While the origin of ISO's standards initially had to do with positioning for doing business in the European Common Market, numerous non-exporting organizations are viewing the standards as a template for their quality activities.

Given the degree of emphasis being placed on quality, organizations are finding that speed at which they move could very well determine their position in the near future.

An analogy of the trend contradicts the outcome of the race between the fabled tortoise and the hare. In the race for superior quality and customer loyalty, businesses will have to move at the speed of the hare while maintaining the consistency and stamina of the tortoise. Companies opting to take it slow in implementing Total Quality will find that their markets are being dominated by those organizations that move swiftly and unswervingly.

Accelerating the pace of acceptance and implementation of Total Quality will require the leadership of top management. Traditional views pertaining to the natural evolution of quality must be replaced with strategic quality planning. Implementing quality in pockets of an organization will not suffice.

There are numerous reasons why organizations are moving slow on the quality paradigm. Some think that it is a fad and are caught up in the belief that this, too, shall pass. Others, in need of a quick fix, or "instant pudding" as quality guru W.

Edwards Deming calls it, are preoccupied with the next quarterly report or figures that might have little to do with quality.

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