

The lessons W. Edwards Deming taught Japanese businesses in the 1950s can also be profitably applied in Canada today.

Quality control is not a new concept. In the Middle Ages, craftsman such as carpenters or masons formed associations called “guilds” to secure fair compensation for their work, and also to protect the “secrets of their trade”. A craftsman learned the “best practices” of his trade as he moved from apprentice to journeyman and ultimately to master, who in turn passed on the quality standards to the next generation of apprentices and journeymen. It was the reliability of the masters’ standards that established the consistency of the product and the loyalty of the customers.

Recognition of the Need for Quality Control

In our own century, the guilds are gone but quality control is essential to maintain clients, to meet provincial, federal and international standards or guidelines, as well as to honour the requirements of the various associations that govern the behaviour of workers within industries.

Established businesses acknowledge the need for quality control after experiencing customer complaints, cost overruns or the production of too many unsalable, substandard finished goods. Unfortunately, owner-managers often find there are no associations they can turn to for assistance with quality control issues.

Quality control experts suggest that the first step to establishing quality control is to work out the exact specifications of the service or product to be produced. This logical (but all too often neglected) first step then determines the raw materials, personnel and knowledge required to create a quality control model.

W. Edwards Deming’s 14-Point Guide to Quality Control

W. Edwards Deming, an American statistician heralded as the foreign expert who did the most to make Japan a manufacturing giant after World War II, evolved a 14-point doctrine that suggested the road to quality control should use the following markers. (This list has been paraphrased because of space restrictions.):

- ✓ Work constantly toward improvement in order to stay competitive, to stay in business and provide jobs.
- ✓ Do not tolerate lack of quality, defects, inadequate training or poor supervision.
- ✓ Do not rely on inspection to ensure quality.
- ✓ Reward suppliers with long-term relationships that are built on loyalty and trust. Awarding suppliers on the basis of price is ineffective.
- ✓ Work constantly to upgrade the system of production and service that will improve quality and production and reduce cost.
- ✓ Establish on-the-job training.
- ✓ Focus leadership on helping people and their equipment do a better job.
- ✓ Do not let employees work in an environment of fear.
- ✓ Eliminate interdepartmental rivalry and treat the whole organization as a team.
- ✓ Rethink the design of your production facility or process. Poor quality and low productivity are the by-product of poor design. Pushing employees to improve quality and productivity without design improvement is counterproductive.
- ✓ Manage increases in productivity rather than establish quotas that force individuals to produce more.
- ✓ Reward quality, not quantity.
- ✓ Establish a culture of education that in turn will foster an attitude of self-improvement.
- ✓ Get all employees working together to accomplish the transformation.

General Guidelines

The following are general guidelines, not explicit instructions for the installation of procedures to achieve quality control. Without everyone understanding their part in the quality control process and supporting it enthusiastically, it will only flourish for a few months before languishing and then disappearing forever.

The benefits of quality control are both abstract and concrete:

- ✓ Products will meet customer requirements, thereby reducing customer complaints.
- ✓ Your business will become the “go-to” business.
- ✓ The cost of building a quality product will determine whether the market willingly absorbs the purchase price.
- ✓ Production quality is consistent.
- ✓ Liability is reduced.
- ✓ Reliability of product or service creates repeat customers.
- ✓ References from satisfied customers promote increased business.
- ✓ Product problems are identified quickly, thereby preventing recalls, delivery of replacements or total shut down of a product line.
- ✓ Built-in quality control may uncover product problems before production start-up, thereby averting loss from inferior products.
- ✓ Employees are happy knowing they have worked with the best to produce the best.
- ✓ Management and employees know that, if difficulties arise, the goal is: “Fix the problem; don’t assign blame.”

Build in Quality Control

Perhaps your business will need an expert to set up quality control procedures. Regardless of whether you hire an expert or institute the procedures with the help of your employees, built-in quality control will deliver the quality of products or service you need to ensure your business gets its fair share of the market.

This and That

As you may know, there are currently over 8,000 homeless men, women and children across the greater Ottawa area who may not have the benefit of a warm winter jacket or mitts during this cold season

THE GOAL: To collect as many winter jackets, snow pants, scarves, mitts and blankets to help our citizens stay warm over the cold Ottawa winter.

We encourage you to use any creative way possible to gather winter clothes. Build teams of friends and family and go door to door, or simply ask friends on Facebook or Twitter to help you.

You can drop off the garments at our office during working hours. In association with a local mortgage brokerage, there will be a weekly pick up at our office until December 6, 2013.

