Hands-on Management

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Preparing for ISO 9000 Begins with Management

The process of starting an ISO quality program can be less intimidating—with or without the help of a consultant—if you break the guiding document down into manageable pieces. The best place to start is at the beginning—not only of the ISO document, but also with the management commitment. The *element 4.1* deals with "Management Responsibilities." In its simplest form, this first element is meant to establish a clear quality policy that can be communicated both inside and outside of the organization.

Dan Bridget, director of quality for Best Access Systems, Indianapolis, IN, has a few suggestions for implementing your own quality policy. He says: "Tell your employees that this is what we aspire to be, and our quality policy is going to help us get there. Don't know how to word it? Ask suppliers and customers you respect to share their quality policy statements with you—they'll take it as a huge compliment. Borrow from them until you have something that fits your organization."[1] For tips and examples of how to write your own quality policy statement, check out **www.exit109.com/~leebee/qpgalery.htm** where you'll find everything from the classic one-sentence statement to a very complete full-page example from H.K. Metalcraft.[2]

The next thing you need is an organizational chart. From the top job to the bottom, list the job titles (not the names of the individuals in the jobs). The chart should give a sense of what positions within the company are responsible for particular tasks, but should not be nearly as detailed as a job description. Job descriptions should follow the organizational chart. Auditors often begin there by looking for specific quality responsibility assignments. Unclear job descriptions or a poorly arranged organizational chart could cause doubts about the assurance of quality.

Element 4.1, however, is about much more than writing a quality policy statement or having an organizational chart for your company. It's about creating a company-wide attitude/philosophy that is intolerant to defects and customer dissatisfaction. "One of the most significant management responsibilities spelled out in this element is the appointment of the Management Quality Representative (MQR). Theoretically, the MQR can be any management member—it shouldn't always automatically be the company's quality manager," said Bridget. "I've seen successful implementations where the MQR was actually an hourly person. I've also seen a situation where a member of the accounting department spearheaded the quality system. The ISO model calls for an MQR with a clear overview of the business. For that reason, the quality manager should not feel in any way slighted if he or she is not appointed MQR . The range of business knowledge needed by an MQR often goes far beyond what is practiced by a traditional QC manager."

Since the time of Aesop's fables, we have used stories to illustrate the quarks of human behavior. This type of folklore is presented as entertainment, but it also usually has a lesson to teach. I would like to use the following story from a website[2] to make one final point. It goes something like this:

Once upon a time, an aerospace company in Maryland and a Japanese automobile company decided to have a boat race on the Potomac River. Both teams practiced long and hard. On the big day, they both felt as ready as they could be.

The Japanese won by a mile.

Afterward, the American team became very discouraged by the loss, and morale sagged. Corporate management decided that the reason for the crushing defeat had to be found. A "Continuous Measurement Improvement" team was set up to investigate the problem and to recommend appropriate corrective action. Their conclusion: The problem was that the Japanese team had eight people rowing and one person steering, whereby the American team had one person rowing and eight people steering.

The American Steering Committee immediately hired a consulting firm to do a study on the management structure. After some time and millions of dollars, the consulting firm concluded that "too many people were steering and not enough were rowing!"

To prevent losing to the Japanese again the next year, the team's management structure was totally reorganized to:

- Four Steering Managers
- Three Area Steering Managers
- One Staff Steering Manager

A new performance review system was started for the person rowing the boat, in order to give him more incentive to work—not harder, but smarter. "We must give him empowerment and enrichment. That should accomplish our Total Quality Management goals!"

The next year, the Japanese won by two miles.

Humiliated, the aerospace company sold the paddle, laid off the rower for poor performance, canceled all capital investment for new equipment, halted development of the new high-tech boat, gave a "High Performance Award" to the consulting firm, and then distributed the money saved as bonuses to the senior executives.

Lessons Learned

The one lesson I want to stress here is that meaningless changes to the business just maintain—and can even perpetuate—the status quo. Today's worker may be many things, but he is not stupid. You cannot win a buy-in at the worker level for anything less than an honest effort at change—and for that effort to succeed, management must be the greatest champion of the quality system it implements. P&SF

References

1. Melissa Larson, "It Starts with Management," *Quality Magazine* (January 1999).
2. **www.isoeasy.org**, a website that offers ISO help & products for sale.