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Get a Handle on Quality

To get a handle on quality, begin with philosophy.

The most powerful method for competing globally is a quality philosophy implemented through business process improvement. If senior managers are willing to educate themselves in quality principles and practices, they will succeed in drafting a policy that's a good fit with employees and the company as a whole.

A quality philosophy is a set of verifiable belief statements that senior managers are willing to be held accountable to by customers and employees. A policy could be printed on a huge poster, signed by employees, then displayed in the front lobby as a sign of everyone's commitment.

A rollout strategy for implementing successful business process improvement (BPI) hinges on senior management's willingness to provide adequate time for training in quality concepts. The quality revolution was started by Deming, Juran, Crosby, Isikkawa and Taguchi, and Japan has been leading its implementation with startling and profoundly productive results.

The following list of principles was adapted from the book *Dr. Deming: The American who Taught the Japanese about Quality* by Rafael Aguayo. These core principles should be management's foundation for creating a quality philosophy.

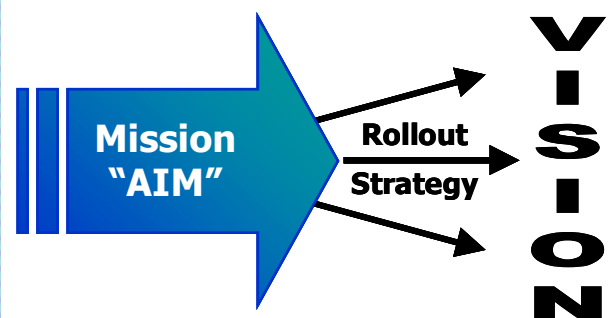
1. Top Level Commitment

- Must be directed by the very highest levels of executive management
- Must not be a "staff" role
- Will need serious support to make changes that threaten the status quo, or demand adequate resources

2. Business Results Driven

- Provides consistency and clarity of purpose
- Is framed and implemented around real, current business realities
- Links business process goals with the company's goals

Implementing a Quality Philosophy



Real Mission Statement:

"The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit."

3. Education in Concepts

Understand the principles of quality, such as:

- The customer-supplier relationship
- Principle of variation
- Continuous improvement
- Fact-based management
- The cost of quality

4. End to End Processes

- Cross-functional teamwork is essential
- Solid link between customer & supplier
- Process is managed start to finish to avoid suboptimization.

5. Continuous Improvement

- Simplify and streamline all processes
- Bring the process under control to meet predictable patterns
- Make the process capable of meeting customer specifications

6. Customer-Supplier Relationship

- Effective feedback and feed-forward of expectations
- Ongoing data and online information to monitor the relationship

7. Customer Driven Improvements

- Start with the customer, build a linkage back to supplier
- Satisfy transient needs, invent expectations
- All employees know customers' needs

8. Fact-Based Management

- Build data collection into the process
- Use data to identify process disconnects
- Problem solving teams recommend solutions based on facts

9. Built-In Adaptation

- Feedback loops ensure continuous revision
- Mistakes are viewed as learning

10. Measures of Performance

- Efficiency: cost meets management needs
- Effectiveness: meets customer needs
- Adaptability: meets continuous changes in the environment

11. Fear-Free Environment

- Drive out fear through honest communication and clear goals
- Involve everyone affected

12. System of Rewards

Be sure to find a way to deliver both monetary rewards (cash, bonuses) and non-monetary benefits such as recognition, Employee of the Year, etc. to deserving employees.

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