Giving Quality to Customers with Effective Management

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In order to implement consistent and sustainable quality outputs, the companies must manage quality effectively. Quality management helps to define quality, implement processes of quality control, and take initiatives in improvement of quality issues. Historically, workers are blamed for most of quality issues with regards to the lack of productivity. According to Deming, the biggest contributors to quality problems, at 85 percent of quality issues, are errors in systems, processes, and poor management. Surprisingly, the worker’s error contributes only the remaining 15 percent of quality issues. Deming points out that it is the responsibility of upper management to promote quality by providing an appropriate quality management strategy and encouraging an environment in which every worker contributes at their full potential. Workers must be properly trained so that quality issues are eliminated and quality is continuously improved. Quality must be considered as the responsibility of every member of the organization, but it is at most important for the upper management team to provide appropriate resources in order to support the commitment to quality as a whole for the organization.

Since success in a business relies on its quality products or services, quality management is a must practice needed to be integrated in a business firm. Quality management is a necessity in providing quality service or produce quality products. To be efficient and effective, one must decide what kind of quality management system to integrate. There are several types of quality management systems. A company’s goals and objectives must be centered when a management chooses an appropriate quality management strategy for their firms. There are a few top quality management systems such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Six Sigma, Quality Function Deployment, ISO 9004, ISO 15504, Kaizen, Zero Defect Program, PDCA (plan, do, check, act cycle for quality control purpose), Quality Cycle, Toyota Production System (lean manufacturing), Taguchi methods, TRIZ (theory of inventive problem solving), Business process reengineering, and Object-Oriented Quality and Risk Management. All of these strategies are created to help an organization’s quality to improve. But, all of them have its own good and it can be a hard decision to choose which one to use. The senior management has to keep in mind that not all quality management systems fit for any specific organization. There are organizations that use a good quality management system, but still fail. So, learning the reasons why organizations fail would help decide which can be implemented as a quality guidance that is useful for the company’s operation.

Adopting quality management is not easy for a business organization. Successful implementation of a quality management system needs understanding, intuitive, knowledge, follow up, and effective management team. As the lack of an effective management can be an issue, making decision on what type of quality management, and choosing standard and quality measurement can also be complicated. In adopting a quality management system, a clear strategy for an effectively communication and training is required. According to the Alexandria marketing research group, if an organization can’t manage to adapt a quality management system successfully, it will be better off without adapting quality management. In addition, the Alexandria marketing research group provides the following top reasons why most of quality management initiatives fail:

1. Partial, fragmented approaches: consent without a clear strategy is disaster
2. Poor communication: only few people in the organization who understand the program
3. Training not related to actual problems: without getting the right information and realizing the real problem, and fixing it. Taking action on the wrong path without learning
4. Internal focus: adapting quality management effort is not aimed at the customers and suppliers, but only within organization
5. Focus only on cleaning up messes instead of delivering superior products and customer service
6. Imposition of an inflexible, predetermined Quality Management program on the organization without tailoring best for its own
7. Focusing on its own performance instead of how customers perceived of the organization performance again competitors. Lack of competitiveness
8. Lack or wrong information from market research which abandonment the key elements of customer satisfaction. Market research is not effectively analyzed or communicated
9. Quality Management effort and strategy is not affiliated with the organization targeted market
10. An organization’s Quality Management effort is not connected with competitive strategy or business results
11. Organizations adopt customer value catchphrase, but not carefully developing competitive metrics
12. Divisions and segments within the targeted market are not clearly understood
13. Key market-driving factors are poorly understood and drawing wrong strategic because customers’ needs, wants, expectations, and dislikes are poorly analyzed
14. Insufficient quality management effort in innovation and product life cycle time
15. Lack of creating values and failing to innovate with new global situation.

Being aware of failures will help management team to be aware, manage better, and plan to be competitive and reach the goal.

**The path to competitiveness**

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1**: The Path to Competitiveness (Source: The Alexandria Marketing Research Group²)

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www.theinternationaljournal.org > RJEBS: Volume: 03, Number: 6, April-2014
Per discussion mentioned above and Figure 2, getting the right resources and information, sourcing and perceiving the information to manage it, selecting the right target market, selecting the right strategy for customer satisfaction, competitive position, and effective communication, choosing the right suppliers and managing suppliers, adapting to change, focusing on delivering superior products and services, understanding markets and production, and promoting creative values are important to avoid major setbacks in implementing a quality management system. Poorly understood business values, wrong information on customer needs, and inability to promote best and creative quality values would degrade the success and potentials of an effective quality management system.

Total Quality Management Approach to Valued Product

Total Quality Management seems to cover all the corrective actions to resolve issues and failures business organizations face implementing a quality management system. Characteristics of TQM include strategic actions to identifying root cause of quality defects and correcting them at the site. In addition to promoting participation of every member of the organization, TQM also stresses that quality is customer driven. It is one of the best quality management strategies that exit today and an organization can utilize as an organizational effort to promote quality in products, services, and business operation. According to Reid, there are seven concepts that make up the philosophy of TQM. These concepts and a summary of their ideas can be found in Figure 3.

![Figure 2: Concepts of the TQM Philosophy (Source: Reid)](image)

Each concept in the TQM approach ensures that every responsible member of the organization is equipped with the right resources and is contributing at their fullest potentials for success of the business organization. To effectively implement and continuously promote improvement in quality, all the members of the organization must be trained and provided resources in order to emphasize the meaning for each concept of the TQM approach. As much as employee empowerment is important for the organization, all other features of the TQM strategy are equally important to produce the products at the highest quality that meets and exceeds customer’s needs and expectations.

The first and foremost feature of TQM focuses on the customers. Focusing on the end process of the product production is not enough to meet the quality that customers expect. An organization needs to work on the front, middle, and back-end process in order to exceed customers’ expectations. The front process would mean directly dealing with customers, understanding customers, and dealing with customers prior to product development to understand and formulate the needs of the new product or service. This would include advertising department, customer service department, market research department, strategic planning department, and 4Ps. It stands for product management, pricing, place, and promotion. And for big business firms, politics and lobby for legislation at the benefits of the firm operation would be involved in the marketing management because it affects marketing and business.

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operation in a significant way. Fully understanding of what customers want and need could greatly help the product development process and help with the business company to design a valued product for customers.

It is hard to believe that quality comes from consumers’ perceptive as consumers give feedbacks on which product or service is bad, good, and superior. But, how would they determine how good is good and how bad is bad? There is a thin margin of quality perception that makes a difference. It is depending on a product or service the customers received, and each of their remarks can be different. Nowadays, with a global market, every business organization is striving to reach the highest quality products possible. One of the basic steps to bring quality is by focusing on ensuring that products are provided to the customers and users with the level of quality they expect. At this point, the market research is indeed needed. Future more, it is critical to have a close relationship with customers and product users to know what they expect of the new products. After all, achieving quality is to meet the needs and expectation of customers. According to Rohit Arora, a strategic planning director of Bates Pan Gulf, the product must have the following general sources of quality guideline:

- Good design: looks and style
- Good functionality: it does the job of what it supposed to do well
- Reliable: acceptable level of breakdowns or failure
- Consistency
- Durable: lasts as long as it should
- Good after sales service
- Value for money

Keeping in mind that value for money is included in the category such that the pricing can greatly influence the quality category. Many successful companies have room for products of different levels of quality, and the price reflects the design of a quality product. And, the higher price reflects the higher quality. In high end luxury products, pricing is a tactic to distinguish from other competitors and to build brand. This pricing tactic is part of self-assertion which is one of the three motivators that drive people to desire and acquire luxury brand. According to Mr. Rohit Arora, there are three motivators that drive people to desire and acquire luxury bands. The three motivators are self-assertion, differentiation, and genuine appreciation for product excellence. As discussed above, self-assertion is to practice exclusivity. Exclusivity has always been associated to quality luxury brands. But, to the consumer’s prospect the definition of exclusivity means an evolution and progress. For the early stage, consumers feel exclusive from having the ability or affluence to own a luxury brand desirable and recognizable by everyone. It would mean that they are asserted themselves from others. This is stating that they could fit-in, and those consumers are just simply making a statement. A quality focused company like Apple does not just make quality products, they have also built the brand, luxury brand with marketing. There are steps for luxury brand marketing and branding. All the successful companies have similar guidelines and sometimes, even more creative. Some of the brand companies created ways to do business that others have to learn from their steps to be success and to consistently offer the best possible products to the customers, at the same, promoting the brand image.

Producing the best possible products happens at the back stage process of product development. Some would define this fine products as Quality Products. But, in this case, this is nothing more than the best possible products, because it would not be quality products until customers decide it. The product, after initial development through customer’s feedbacks, would be transferred to the

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4 Rohit Arora. “8 P’s of Luxury Brand Marketing”.
production phase, where the product or service being built and produced for market distribution. At this back-end stage, the productivity of quality products is monitored to ensure the quality products are being produced effectively and efficiently. Utilizing TQM approach, the production processes can be controlled and monitored to minimize defects and errors. With quality tools provided in the TQM strategy, monitoring the production processes become easily accessible and provide value information for the senior management to continue running lean operation. In order to meet quality that is required for products being produced, TQM helps apply its strategy in quality control of production outputs and defined quality standards. Since quality of raw material required to produce products must also meet high quality standards, the TQM approach extends to raw material suppliers in order to ensure that they follow the same quality practices and provide materials that meet preset quality standards. Involving the suppliers in the every stage of production would ensure more effective control in variation of material and the ability to respond quickly to resolve issues with quality standards. Each concept of TQM ensures that the product is designed and produced per the quality standards preset by the customer’s needs and expectation. Many times, focusing on customer’s needs and wants prior to the production process helps significantly to define the quality standards of the product. Initial customer’s feedback is one of the most important parts of the product cycle because customers have different levels of expectation on the product quality. There are foster quality improvement, training employees, and integrating quality into process management to improve quality, but customers are still the ones who decide all these process efforts were worthwhile. Thus, the early investment in gathering customer’s feedback on what the next generation product should be help companies to identify not only the potential product, but also of the quality standards of that potential product.

Implementing a quality management system successfully requires the business organization to understand its business goals and objectives. As each business is found uniquely, the practice of quality management varies upon those unique differences and objectives. It is the top management responsibility to align the quality needs with the business model and to choose an appropriate quality management system that improves the company’s ability and mobility for innovation, decision making, and improvement in ensuring quality of internal operational standards and processes. Time to time, business organizations fail to provide adequate quality products and services to the customers due to its inability to implement a quality management to ensure productivity and effectiveness in overall business performance. Quality is a lackluster in promoting the company’s brand, and the poor quality experiences with the customers demote the company’s ability to produce high-quality products. In these types of quality management failure in business organizations, a quality management that can ensure the effectiveness of the performance of every responsible member participating in that particular organization is greatly needed. Practices of quality management must be carried out as an organizational effort not only to improve the operational outcomes, but also to achieve long term customer satisfaction with high-quality products and services. Among a variety of quality management systems, Total Quality Management stands out with its ability to promote effectiveness of the performance at an organization level. Total Quality Management utilizes an organized management approach to long-term success through customer satisfaction. With Total Quality Management, high-quality products can be ensured at a continuous effort by promoting refinements in the operation processes at an organization level as quality issues arise. Figure 4 shows Hitachi’s system for effectively accessing quality control and management of processes and departments. It shows that quality management is an integral part of best practices of a continuous improvement process in the organization.

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5 Business Excellence. “What is Total Quality Management”.

6 Rouse, Margaret. “Total Quality Management (TQM)”. 
Importance of Communication in Total Quality Management

After all, the important characteristic of producing quality valued products is that of having effective communication across the business operation. Communication is important for many parts of the business operation for the company to relate to the customers and to produce a market leading product. Communication is needed between customers and the company and departments within the company. The business organization needs to put emphasis on communication in order to produce quality products and service because communication acts as a medium for emphasizing goals and standards set through a quality management system. The company management team should take great precaution and necessary steps to develop the best possible communication for the business operation. The major fields of communication start with finding out what customers need and want, delivering the message from customers to the management team, to the development team, processing team, and to the customer feedbacks management. Having an effective communication would be like a life cycle that should be kept going throughout the existence of the company and that should be continuously practiced to produce quality valued products. In all these aspects, quality management team and different product development teams are working together and communicating effectively for all the processes in order to make sure the company produces the best of all.

Figure 3: Hitachi System for Evaluating Quality Management in Departments. (Source: Loughlin)

Loughlin, Mark. “Discuss the key elements of Total Quality Management within the context of the emerging business environment”.

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7 Loughlin, Mark. “Discuss the key elements of Total Quality Management within the context of the emerging business environment”.
Communication is the bridge between customers and the quality products or service that they would receive. Having a bold claim like this might sound a bit strange, but it is definitely an essential step to bring quality. Depending on the effectiveness of the communication, the outcome of the quality would be varied. After all, the customers, the end users, are the one who determine what the quality is. The expectation meet their experiences, the standard of the quality would come out. Of course, there are many other ways of standardizing and controlling quality. But, there are times making the products with the best raw materials and the best process, these still would not be the top quality products if it does not meet the needs of customers and exceed customers’ expectation. Thus, the communication steps into fill that bridge of the quality which is needed by an organization and its customers. Effective communication connects the bridge between the customers and the organization. And yet, it would also help to meet the organization’s goal which is making exactly the needs of customers. With appropriate information on customer’s needs and desires, the business organization can use marketing management to exceed the customer’s expectation. Communication is critical in relationship, building and managing relationships with customers, workers, departments, and even within leaderships. Figure 5 shows how communication is part every significant characteristic of daily business operation.
Bring quality products to customers’ hands is not an easy task. It needs a good strategy that all the departments in an organization need to work together on it. There are many departments in an organization, and it is really important for each department to maintain and reach the same company goal. This is where the managers need to adopt effective organizational communication. Organizational communication is a process by activities of society are collected and coordinated in order to reach the organization’s goals and goals of every individual of the organization should be matched. This is a component of effective quality management in an organization. First step is to make clear goal, mission, and vision of an organization. Without clear goals, people cannot be working as an organized group and it can be managed clearly. And yet, it will avoid duplication, create advantage on synergy across communications, and create more effective and efficient outcomes. After defining the clear goal, managers should define each group tasks and responsibility. One might wonder how an organization would know what customers need and want. This is one main target to focus in order to build customers expected quality product and provide service. Adopting marketing communication management would help to define organizations relationships with customers and also enhance the communication within an organization to real its organization target goals. After all, it would help to manage on branding product or service such as what type of messages, and channels to suit customers’ preferences. With all this effective strategic and management, an organization would bring quality product that customers are expecting.

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