



Quality, it is not only about Certificates

Introduction

ISO9001:2000 TickIT, Zero Defects standard, ISO27001:2005; ITIL best practices; PRINCE2 certified project managers, etc. Certifications and certification programs, are they the key to company's successes? Is Quality just about certificates and will these certificates stand when dealing with people? What does influence the Quality Culture of a company?

No one will underestimate the importance of certification as they are proof of competence in specific domains, both in technological & management domains. Let's focus on a set of Quality Culture values which are the real cornerstones of a company's successes.

Essential values of a Quality Culture

Culture is the shared beliefs, values, attitudes, institutions, and behaviour patterns that characterize the members of a community or organization. In the type of culture we are going to cover, what's good for the company *and* for customers comes together and becomes the driving force behind what you and everyone else do.

An important value to companies is that *we're all in this together*. It focuses us that individual success depends on how everyone in the company works together and that the company's success depends on all individuals doing their work well. The company's welfare is directly linked to that of its suppliers, employees, and customers.

Open communication is essential. It is about empathy and listening. Empathy has to do with proactively seeing the world from the perspective of others (our colleagues, customers, suppliers, the community). It is having an appreciation of their problems, their abilities, and their behaviours. It is about being able to listen without 'filters'. In a company where we are all in this together, empathy is a sensible and realistic attitude for dealing with others.

Today, more than ever, information and what we make of it, knowledge, are at the heart of what we do. Therefore, *everyone should have access to all the information they need*. Each of us uses information to help us understand the current state of affairs in our company. This information provides direction for what we will do next and, even more importantly, direction for how to improve. It does mean that employees, customers and suppliers have access to all information as they need it, and they are aware of what's available and are responsible for taking advantage of this information.

Organizations are systems that have *processes* for turning inputs into outputs. It moves everyone away from a "blame the person" mentality to a "*blame the process and let's fix it*" approach to problems and improvement. Blaming individuals for problems undermines also other values of a quality culture. How can you really develop a "we're all in this together" value when individuals are worried about their jobs?

Analysis

An important insight is that *failure and success are always value judgments we render after the fact*. We might like what happens; we might be disappointed. But in either case, it's a temporary situation, another experience that we can take note of and learn from. Success and failure are stops along the road for any business, they are just learning experiences.

Understanding Quality Culture values and seeing the usefulness of them is a start to work with others in the company to develop the values along with policies and procedures that are consistent with them. By doing so, you might build a company Quality Management System certified by an ISO9001:2000 TickIT Quality Certification, this as a result and not as goal.