

Editor's Note: In her article, Margo Murray discusses eight guidelines of TQM and what can happen in organizations today—even ITC clubs. While reading this, substitute the word *member* for the word *customer* to better appreciate the relevance of TQM for ITC.

Building an Environment for Total Quality

Margo Murray

You say the Emperor's new clothes don't exactly suit you?

The "Q" word is on the tip of everyone's tongue today. An analyst of the international economic situation blames the poor quality of American products for the loss of jobs in the United States. One unhappy customer tells nine other people about unsatisfactory quality in expected service. The administrator of a public agency grouches about the lower quality of employees entering the door.

On the positive side, brochures promoting conferences and business seminars all seem to have a session on improving quality. Articles in industry journals and professional periodicals counsel on strategies for winning the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the United States. Similar articles in other countries exhort managers to prepare employees for the standards of work specified in ISO 9000. Slick binders bulge with the workbooks, leaders' manuals, and reference libraries of programs that promise you "Immediate Results." Companies are spending upwards of \$1,300 per employee to train them for "total quality." One Baldrige winner reportedly spent \$25 million on an education blitz in 1987, while Xerox (1989 winner) invested more than four million employee-hours and 125 million to educate employees about quality principles.¹

Legendary names cite their own research and writings about quality in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s to stake claims for creation of quality con-

cepts: Scanlon, Juran, Deming, Ishikawa, and more recently, Crosby,



Joiner, Imai, and Taguchi. Even with that history, the current *right-sizing* of many organizations all over the world makes it obvious that jobs are lost when businesses cannot complete with top quality services and products.

Is it the "one size fits all" construction?

At the larger end of the scale Deming's 14 Points for Transforming Western Management are delivered in a "messianic and dogmatic . . ." lecture.² The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Examination adds another dimension of size with seven Examination Categories.

Deming exhorts management to eliminate numerical quotas for work and numerical goals, yet 1989 Baldrige winner Milliken & Company set "Ten-Four" objectives of a tenfold improvement in quality in four years. Crosby talks quality, and measurement of the cost of not satisfying customers, with eight guidelines in which the selected words make the acronym FANATICS.³ The size shrinks to three in the Juran Trilogy™, which stresses quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement.⁴ While others deemphasize the numbers, Juran's Institute workshops train on statistical process control.

The fabrication may be inappropriate for your climate

One message is clear in all of the articles reporting lessons learned in striving for total quality—look before you leap into any program. "Plan Before Using" is the advice cited in the April 1990 issue of *The Benchmark*, relating a case from AT&T's Merrimack Valley Works that backfired when large numbers of employees were exposed to Deming without preparation and followup.⁵ Careful planning and evidence of upper management's commitment to change are critical to the successful pursuit of total quality. Preparing the environment for a total quality effort seems almost too simplistic a suggestion. However, the above case, and hundreds like it, suggest that this key step is often skipped. A zealous con-

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vert to total quality can convince the decision makers to train everyone on total quality management. The hazard is that the training program remains a separate "thing" and never gets integrated into the day-to-day performance of jobs.

You don't need a royal fix for a common problem

Whether you want to vie for the Baldrige award, meet the ISO 9000 criteria, or just satisfy your customers, and yourself, that your organization believes and behaves total quality performance, there are some key guidelines for preparing to succeed. These guidelines are equally applicable to a group whose focus is on implementing a total quality program, or improving the quality of results, and to the individual who believes in delivering total quality performance.

1. Build the foundation first. The environment must be healthy and hospitable for living things. Quality service strategies can only be carried out by everyone when everyone knows the vision of the leaders and the mission of the organizational unit. Commitment to quality and performing in a total quality way must start at the top.

2. Decide what results will be measured, and how to track them. It is a myth that quality results from statistical process controls.⁶ However, what you measure and track must be those *vital few* indicators of the results you and your customers want.

3. Create the long-term goals for the group from an analysis of the stakeholders' expectations today and tomorrow. Involve every member of the group in the process of proactively setting and agreeing on goals.

4. Determine who is responsible for what function that must be carried out if the goals are to be achieved. A key element of motivation for any task is clearly defined responsibilities.

5. Select the priority strategies that will put you on a direct path to your results, in the most cost-effective way.

6. Recognize that every organization entity, to an individual, has a different customer or set of customers. Close collaboration with those customers will provide each performer the knowledge of what is wanted and a focus on delivering quality products and services on time, every time. Systematically obtain feedback from your customers for improving quality constantly and forever.

7. Practice strategic thinking by linking daily business decisions about what you do, and when and how you do it, to the mission and goals of the group, and to your individual objectives.

8. Put in place a process for recognizing and rewarding quality performance within the framework of the job itself and for actual results produced.

But I don't see . . .

Right! Total quality is not a new thing. Actually, in its best realization it isn't a *thing* at all. It is a concept of how products are produced and service delivered. How you achieve total quality in meeting your customers' expectations with your products and services will depend on the degree to which you can integrate this concept into the daily work of all performers. Concepts, models, and guidelines abound. The ultimate key is to avoid letting the wardrobe selection become

an obstacle to progress on your journey to total quality.

¹ *Nation's Business*, January 1990, p. 29

² "Gurus in Profile," *The Benchmark*, Issue 1, Spring 1990, p. 11

³ Crosby, P. B., *Let's Talk Quality*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1989

⁴ Juran, J. M., *Programs for Companywide Quality Management*, Juran Institute, Inc., 1986

⁵ "Gurus in Profile," *The Benchmark*, Issue 1, Spring 1990, p. 11

⁶ Brache, A. and Rummel, G., "Six Myths of Quality," *Business Age*[®], Volume 1, Number 12, November 1987

About the author: Margo Murray is president and chief operating officer of MMHA *The Managers' Mentors*, Inc., an international consulting firm. Her book, *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Program*, includes twenty years of research and client experiences with her Facilitated Mentoring Model[®], Jossey•Bass Publishers.

Margo was elected Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations for 1992-1993. Of the twenty current Directors and Officers, from sixteen countries, Margo is the only woman.

A member of ITC since 1960, and now a life member, Margo served on the ITC Board of Directors as Vice President, Public Relations and Vice President, Southern Regions, 1974-76. ■ ■ ■

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