



7 PRINCIPLES OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRANSFORMING YOUR PROCESSES FOR SUSTAINED IMPROVEMENT

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Total Quality Management (TQM) is an established framework used across many industries, particularly manufacturing, that assures that an agreed-upon series of factors are addressed in the process to create a superior product or service.

In most cases, TQM is comparable to a continual quality assurance audit since it involves a streamlined network of factors that is never-ending. These factors work in tandem to contribute to an end product, or, in industries like software or engineering, a greater quality of service. In either scenario, organizations that have successfully achieved TQM raised the market standard of their product of service. This is a transformative approach that, for customers, will make traditional market factors like price no longer the ultimate determinate of purchasing.

TQM is considered essential for the long-term sustainability of organizations. As a management concept, TQM is a shift away from focusing on process control and more on an organization's culture. Raising the performance of an organization can lead to substantial structural change. It can be achieved by the following suite of factors:

Focusing on the Customer

Under TQM, the barometer of quality is no longer defined by the organization, but by the customer, or end user, and whether or not it satisfies the full scope of their needs and expectations. This will result in stronger sales, greater customer loyalty, and a positive reputation.

To achieve this, organizations must view everything they do through the eyes of the customers and incorporate that into their strategy and processes.

In order to successfully focus on the customer, organizations need to:

- > Conduct continuous research to understand their needs and expectations.
- > Manage relationships with customers so they are sustained over time.
- > Communicate with them to get feedback.
- > Align the organization's values with what customers recognize as their own.

Total Management Commitment

TQM can only be effective if it has the total commitment of management, from leaders in the C-suite, on down through frontline supervisors. Leaders reflect the culture they intend to set. They are responsible for setting expectations and policies, and giving workers a broad perspective of the kind of organization they are setting out to become. If they fail to truly live those values, or appear inauthentic, they risk losing the faith of the employees who are tasked to raise the quality of their product or service.

Leaders who continually anticipate customer needs and work to deliver them in ways that are helpful and add value are those that are most likely to win over employees and sustain the future of the organization.



Total Employee Commitment

The natural outcome of a total management commitment is a total commitment among workers. As leadership trains and educates workers on the higher standards of performance, they seek to establish in their process or service, employees can become faster in solving problems, executing their role in the process, or just show greater productivity. The organization will also see greater retention, accountability, and ultimately, customer satisfaction.

The key is providing motivation and a greater sense of satisfaction in how they contribute to this transformation.

In order to achieve total employee commitment, organizations must:

- > Clearly communicate the vision of leadership.
- > Provide sufficient training and resources to achieve that vision.
- > Create a culture where problem-solving is encouraged.
- > Reward success and share it among all workers so they feel a stake in the vision.
- > Encourage self-learning and feedback.

Continuous Improvement

TQM is fluid. It does not have an end point, but instead relies on a continuous re-establishing of its principles throughout the organization, from top management to the front-line workers. The commitment of both management and employees needs to be sustained in order for improvements to continually take place in the process.

Continuous improvement matters because it helps prevent disruptions, slowdowns, breakage, and bottlenecks in the process. Improving collective knowledge among employees also leads to innovation. To do this requires:

- > Frequent training sessions for employees to strengthen their existing role or to prepare them for new ones.
- > Encouragement to innovate and ultimately improve processes.
- > Recognition of innovations that improve processes.

Greater Communications

TQM requires a good communications plan because without one, the strategy will ultimately fall flat and not make its way throughout every level of the organization. Because TQM is continuous, improved

communications will eliminate silos and encourage coordination and cooperation between segments of the organization. Employees will gain a greater understanding of the ultimate vision, and the organization will have a greater chance of implementing its transformative policies and procedures. Implementing a communications plan will require:

- > Establishing a method for continuous employee feedback.
- > Creating a line of communication so everyone receives updates in real time.
- > Transparency so all employees have a clear grasp of their roles within the organization.

A Process Approach

TQM forces organizations to examine and fine-tune their processes so it becomes better oriented around customer expectations and demands. Organizations can do this proactively by reviewing their product and service at the end of the process, or catching flaws during. The benefit of paying special attention to each step of the process is that it will create more predictable outcomes. Organizations can avoid breakdowns and delays, lower their costs, and increase revenue when there is a consistent focus on improving the process for success. Ways they can achieve this include:

- > Analyzing metrics to improve potential bottlenecks.
- > Investing in Internet of Things (IoT) technology, such as artificial intelligence and sensors, to predict potential breakdowns.
- > Clearly defining roles and responsibilities among supervisors and workers.
- > Establishing action plans to respond to stoppages or other breaks in the process.



The Fact-Based Approach

Organizations must rely on accurate data to help them shape strategies that push them to make smarter decisions. The benefits are obvious: Better decisions lead to greater productivity, cost efficiency, and profitability. Analytics can help drive predictive behavior to prevent slowdowns or stoppages. It can also give organizations a better understanding of what techniques or innovations can improve — or impede — the process.

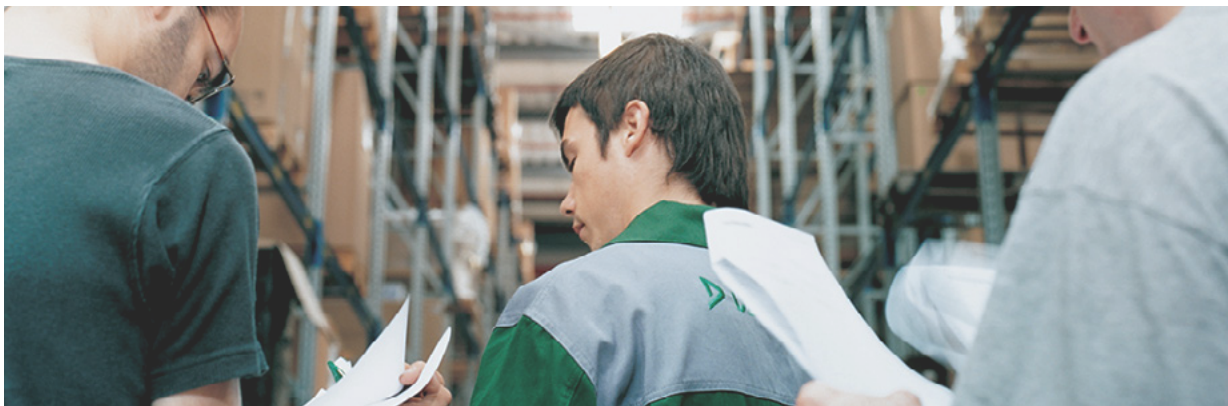
Finally, smart data also can give organizations a clear picture of the market in which they operate. They can “see” market trends in actions and respond to them so they don’t fall behind or become redundant. Ways to implement the Fact-Based Approach include:

- > Investing in IoT technology, such as artificial intelligence and sensors, that gathers data for accurate real-time analytics.
- > Sharing relevant data with all stakeholders so they become involved in the process.
- > Making sure that all strategic decisions are based in data, not more ethereal factors like intuition or presumption.

Conclusion

TQM is an ongoing process that involves assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling needs that are established throughout the organization and among all stakeholders, from top management to frontline workers. Customer feedback alone cannot serve as the barometer of TQM. Instead, organizations must rely on audits to improve the quality, consistency, and reliability in their operations. Because they focus on specifics, audits give organizations reliable accounting and insights into all aspects of the organization, opposed to random checks on end-products or customer feedback, which can be unreliable and not consistent.

Depending on the industry, audits for TQM represent the best way to help organizations meet continually changing compliance standards and other regulations. By creating clear documentation for controls across the organization, audits will review all initiatives, identify potential flaws and provide actionable steps for improving overall quality efforts. In a world where change is constant, audits serve organizations by keeping them prepared and, in some instances, ahead of the curve.



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