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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract:

As far as industries are concerned, in the present scenario of liberalization and growing tough competition in the national and international market place, the only way of survival, growth and market leadership is by improving the quality of their product and services. The organizations are adopting various practices and technologies in order to maintain and improve quality of their product. This paper lays out some of the quality improvement technologies used in industries. These technologies can coexist in an organization i.e. these may not be mutually exclusive and in fact multiple technologies may be used at once. The paper aims an attempt to make introduction to some of the techniques used for quality improvement.

KEYWORDS-

Benchmarking, process simplification, reengineering, tendering, TQM, ISO.

INTRODUCTION

As far as industries are concerned, in the present circumstances of liberalization and growing tough competition in domestic and international market place, the only way of survival, growth and market leadership is by improving the quality of their product and services. Today's buyer has an abundance choice, therefore looks for excellence in quality, value and cost when he chooses his supplier. Those companies who have survival and growth agenda in their corporate plans have no option, than to maintain quality of their products or services. Quality is always the result of intelligent effort and there it has to be managed. Quality Improvement is defined as "actions taken throughout the organization to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of activities and processes to provide added benefits to both organization and customers (ISO 8402:1994)". Quality improvement is anything, which causes a beneficial change in quality performance.

Some of the competing technologies available for quality improvement as described by Mike Asher are :

1. Benchmarking
2. Process simplification
3. Business process reengineering
4. Competitive tendering/market testing
5. Implementing ISO 9000 system
6. Total Quality Management

BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking is 'the process by which internal processes or services are evaluated and the later compared with the performance of others'. Benchmarking is all about identifying gaps in performance and closing these gaps by putting in place best practice, thereby establishing superior performance. It is therefore a form of gap analysis. It is a technique that is used to take an independent look at performance by comparing one's own with the performance of others, so setting an agenda for improvement. The companies are constantly striving to improve everything they do through continuous learning. One of the best learning tools at their disposal is benchmarking, which often provides learning that can be applied immediately.

PROCESS SIMPLIFICATION

Process simplification is 'a structured approach to continually improve process'. It is about understanding how a process works then by identifying gaps, dead ends, duplication and redundant steps, seeking to improve the process incrementally. It includes aspects like:

- + Identifying the process to be studied
- + Identifying the study team
- + Construct an outline flowchart of the process
- + Draw the detail flowchart of the process
- + Using the flowchart, identify gaps dead ends etc
- + Plan to remove these
- + Document the new process
- + Disband the team

This approach fits well with the quality system methodology and helps people to understand jobs and processes better.

BUSINESS PROCESS REENGINEERING

Michael Hammer defines, 'business process reengineering is to fundamentally change the way work is performed in order to achieve radical performance improvements in quality, speed and cost'. It is a technique that focuses on the mission of an organization and asks what processes are critical for survival and success This includes the following steps :

- +Establish the mission and vision
- +Establish the critical success factors
- +Establish the key business processes
- +Decide what processes to re-engineer
- +Evaluate current performance
- +Analyze why this is so?
- +Starting with a clean sheet, reinvent the process
- +Compare the two processes
- +Plan to implement the change
- +Competitive Tendering / Market Testing

Competitive tendering/market testing 'is the process by which in-house functions are exposed to competition'. Market testing is all about identifying non core activities and then carrying out a critical evaluation of their effectiveness, thereby giving reduced costs, enhanced productivity and improved quality and leading to improved value for money. It is a technique that is used to examine what is done and looks for alternative methods of producing the results so giving the organization better value. There are well-established processes for both the internal and tendering parts of market testing.

The Internal Process is :

- + Appoint a steering group and project manager
- + Identify and ring fence the current service
- + Cost the current service

- ✦ Establish the user requirements
- ✦ Review the potential external suppliers
- ✦ Develop a detailed specification

The tender process is :

- ✦ Advertise the service to be rendered for
- ✦ Carry out pre-qualification of tenderers
- ✦ Invitation to tender
- ✦ Briefing the potential suppliers
- ✦ Submission of tender
- ✦ Evaluation of quotations

An award for the contract and the monitoring of supplier performance follows this.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

In contrast to many improvement methodologies, total quality is a management led process.. This allows improvement to be taken at a pace that is acceptable to the whole company. It is an organisationwide commitment to getting things right..It affects everyone in the organization and it is thought that in order for the organization to be competitive and therefore successful, the philosophies, principles and the practices must be accepted by everyone.TQM aims at focused actions, leading to improved quality of work and improving the organization as a whole. It enables an organization, through a coordinated strategy of teamwork and innovation to satisfy customer expectations, needs and requirements. In many organizations introduction to quality have been via the quality system route i.e. adoption of ISO 9000 standard.

ISO STANDARDS

ISO 9000 standards are intended to develop and establish quality management system to accomplish the quality objective s of the company. The concept of quality underlying ISO 9000 is meeting customer requirements. A product or a service therefore, has quality when it satisfies the user needs, both stated and implied (another term for customer requirement). For any business, which depends on its ultimate survival on satisfying a market, meeting customer requirement is clearly vital. they are not satisfied, they can always buy from someone else. In this sense therefore quality is the core task of the business. It is not an option. It is necessary for survival.

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