Quality Management

Those who work in Quality often refer to the Quality Management System (QMS). The QMS is not a machine or an application, but is the underlying Quality process foundation on which the organization sits. The term “QMS” includes all the people, processes, trainings, policies, and technologies that are involved in an organization’s Culture of Quality, as well as the key business objectives that make up its goals. Some organizations address quality with greater stringency than other organizations. That culture trickles down to how the staff address quality issues in the workplace. The further away an organization’s culture is from adhering to the principles of a Culture of Quality, the more difficult and failure-prone the implementation is likely to be, particularly if a commitment to core values clashes with underlying assumptions.

Quality has been defined as "the degree to which something meets or exceeds the expectations of its consumers." The precise definition of quality can vary between industries and organizations. Quality is both a perspective and an approach to increasing customer satisfaction, reducing cycle time and costs, and eliminating errors and rework using a set of defined tools such as Root Cause Analysis, Pareto Analysis, etc. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines “Quality” as “the degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfills a requirement,” and “requirement” as “a need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory.”

Examples of requirements include:

* Customer specifications such as reliability, availability, accuracy, and delivery dates.
* Value for goods and services purchased such as ROI and productivity gains.
* Various ISO standards relating to Quality including ISO 9001, IATF 16949, and ISO 13485.
* Statutory requirements such as the Food Safety Modernization Act, FDA code of federal regulations, Canadian Standards Association, Underwriters Laboratories, EU directives, and the Occupational Health & Safety Act.
* Various industry requirements.

Quality management is the act of overseeing different activities and tasks within an organization to ensure that products and services offered, as well as the means used to provide them, are consistent. It helps to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality within the organization.

Quality improvement is a structured approach to evaluating the performance of a company’s systems, policies, procedures, and processes and then determining what improvements are needed, warranted, or beneficial. Successful efforts rely on the routine collection and analysis of data. A quality improvement plan describes the resources and steps the company uses to monitor and evaluate initiatives and results made under the intention of improving operations in the company.

Quality improvement is data driven and regards the quantitative approach as the only reliable means to influence the qualitative elements. Quality improvement is data driven and regards the quantitative approach as the only reliable means to influence the qualitative elements. QI involves people as part of the improvement solution and looks for what is attributed to barriers the company and its staff experience, who are directly involved in and best understand the processes in an organization.

The Benefits of a Quality Improvement Include:

* Solutions that focus on failures in processes, not flaws in people
* A reliance on objective, data-driven solutions, rather than subjective opinions, to identify inefficiencies, preventable errors, and inadequate processes
* Improvements that provide better customer service, increased efficiency, greater safety, and higher revenues
* A localized focus on testing small, incremental improvements that is less risky than a focus on making changes at one time
* Data collection to monitor improvement efforts, which can provide the basis for reimbursement and certification programs, particularly in healthcare organizations

Quality assurance can be defined as part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. The confidence provided by quality assurance is twofold—internally to management and externally to customers, government agencies, regulators, certifiers, and other third parties. An alternate definition is all the planned and systematic activities implemented within the quality system that can be demonstrated to provide confidence that a product or service will fulfill requirements for quality. Quality assurance is a form of audit taken after a policy or procedure is implemented to determine if it has met the standards it was intended for. The key point here is QA is an ”after something happens” process.

Quality control can be defined as part of quality management focused on fulfilling quality requirements. While quality assurance relates to how a process is performed or how a product is made, quality control is more the inspection aspect of quality management. An alternate definition is "the operational techniques and activities used to fulfill requirements for quality. Qualitycontrol (QC) is a procedure or set of procedures intended to ensure that a manufactured product or performed service adheres to a defined set of criteria and standards, as to meet the expectations of what the service or equipment was intended for.

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Quality management in businesses is vital to ensure consistency in its processes, as well as in its products and services. In business, customer satisfaction is key. As a customer’s main concern is the quality of the products or services they purchase, the supplier’s main goal should always be to ensure that what they produce is of consistent and fine quality.

As it says, root cause analysis is the process of seeking out and analyzing the fundamental “root” cause of an issue, risk, or hazard in the company. By figuring out the origin of the problem, you can resolve the problem rather than continuing to make temporary and superficial patches on the problem. Root cause analysis can be traced to the broader field of total quality management (TQM). Root cause analysis is part of a more general problem-solving process and an integral part of continuous improvement.

Quality measures are tools that help measure or quantify operational processes, outcomes, employee and customer perceptions, and business structure and systems that are associated with the ability to provide high-quality service and products that relate to one or more quality goals for the company. These goals should include: effective, safe, efficient, customer-centered, and timely service.