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WHAT IS TQM?

In the 1950s, the Japanese asked W. Edwards Deming, an American statistician and management theorist, to help them improve their war torn economy. By implementing Deming's principles of total quality management (TQM), Japan experienced dramatic economic growth. In the 1980s, when the United States began to see a reduction in its own world market share in relation to Japan, American business rediscovered Deming.

Quality management experts, Joseph Juran and Philip Crosby, also contributed to the development of TQM theories, models, and tools. TQM is now practiced in business as well as in government, the military, education, and in non-profit organizations including libraries (Jurow & Barnard, 1993).

TQM is "a system of continuous improvement employing participative management and centered on the needs of customers" (Jurow & Barnard, 1993). Key components of TQM are employee involvement and training, problem-solving teams, statistical methods, long-term goals and thinking, and recognition that the system, not people, produces inefficiencies. Libraries can benefit from TQM in three ways: breaking down interdepartmental barriers; redefining the beneficiaries of library services as internal customers (staff) and external customers (patrons); and reaching a state of continuous improvement (Jurow & Barnard, 1993).

A library should focus on providing the best services possible, and be willing to change to serve its customers. To determine if changes need to be made, a library administrator might ask: What are our niche markets? What do the customers come in for? How can I look at the efficiency of my library? How do we serve the current customers that exist today? (Total Quality Management, 1995). First learn about the customer, then solve the problems.

14 STEPS TO TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Based on his work with Japanese managers and others, Deming (1986; Walton, 1986) outlined 14 steps that managers in any type of organization can take to implement a total quality management program.

1. Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service. Contancy of purpose requires innovation, investment in research and education, continuous improvement of product and service, maintenance of equipment, furniture and fixtures, and new aids to production.

2. Adopt the new philosophy. Management must undergo a transformation and begin to believe in quality products and services.

3. Cease dependence on mass inspection. Inspect products and services only enough to be able to identify ways to improve the process.

4. End the practice of awarding business on price tag alone. The lowest priced goods are not always the highest quality; choose a supplier based on its record of improvement and then make a long-term commitment to it.

5. Improve constantly and forever the system of product and service. Improvement is not a one-time effort; management is responsible for leading the organization into the practice of continual improvement in quality and productivity.

6. Institute training and retraining. Workers need to know how to do their jobs correctly even if they need to learn new skills.

7. Institute leadership. Leadership is the job of management. Managers have the responsibility to discover the barriers that prevent staff from taking pride in what they do. The staff will know what those barriers are.

8. Drive out fear. People often fear reprisal if they "make waves" at work. Managers need to create an environment where workers can express concerns with confidence.

9. Break down barriers between staff areas. Managers should promote teamwork by helping staff in different areas/departments work together. Fostering interrelationships among departments encourages higher quality decision-making.

10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce. Using slogans alone, without an investigation into the processes of the workplace, can be offensive to workers because they imply that a better job could be done. Managers need to learn real ways of motivating people in their organizations.

11. Eliminate numerical quotas. Quotas impede quality more than any other working

condition; they leave no room for improvement. Workers need the flexibility to give customers the level of service they need.

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12. Remove barriers to pride of workmanship. Give workers respect and feedback about how they are doing their jobs.

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13. Institute a vigorous program of education and retraining. With continuous improvement, job descriptions will change. As a result, employees need to be educated and retrained so they will be successful at new job responsibilities.

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14. Take action to accomplish the transformation. Management must work as a team to carry out the previous 13 steps.

HOW LIBRARIES HAVE IMPROVED SERVICES WITH TQM

Many libraries have implemented TQM successfully. Harvard College Library created a task force which rewrote the library's vision statement, and considered changes that would have to be made in order to develop a new organization culture--one that "highlights the changing nature of staff roles and responsibilities in an era of pervasive change" (Clack, 1993). With the help of consultants, Harvard learned about TQM, and found that its principles of service excellence, teamwork, ongoing training and skill building, process/systems focus, continuous improvement, and cooperation across boundaries could help them make the changes they needed.

The Oregon State University Libraries also decided to test TQM. Two small teams, the Shelving Team from the stack maintenance unit, and the Documents Team from the government publications unit worked with outside facilitators. Each team surveyed users and staff and found that some issues, perceived as critical by staff, were not perceived as critical by customers and therefore needed rethinking in terms of TQM. The Shelving Team, which wanted to address the problem of longlasting shelving backlogs, found that the shelvers, who worked alone on the floors, felt isolated and unmotivated to make progress. Using this information, the team devised a plan for shelvers to work in small groups and have an assigned floor. The result was an increased "espirit de corps," tidier shelves, and less backlog (Butcher, 1993).

Sirkin (1993) suggests some ways a library might use the principles of TQM to enhance library services.

-- Create service brochures and information kits

-- Conduct a user survey about library services

-- Improve signage

-- Change hours of operation

-- Provide a more convenient material return

-- Simplify checkout of materials

-- Use flexibility in staff assignments

-- Cooperate with local government

-- Ask vendors to give product demonstrations

-- Give new staff a thorough orientation

-- Create interdepartmental library advisory groups

-- Improve the physical layout of the library

-- Track complaints

-- Develop an active outreach program

-- Open satellite offices

-- Publicize new or changed services

-- Develop user and staff training materials

-- Target services to specific groups

-- Offer electronic document delivery

-- Follow the mission statement

-- Smile

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

While TQM clearly has positive aspects, implementing it can have potential challenges as well. Jurow and Barnard (1993) identify four barriers to the adoption of TQM in

libraries: (1) vocabulary: objections to terms such as "total," "quality," and "management" which imply that high standards are not already being met; (2) commitment: TQM takes several years to implement and requires a long-term commitment by library managers; (3) process: our culture tends to be impatient and we try to solve problems quickly, contrary to TQM's careful process analysis; and (4) professionalization: professional staff can be resistant to turning over their practices and services to what they perceive as the "uninformed whims of the customer." Sirkin (1993) also notes that it is not possible to satisfy everyone's demands; choices will need to be made.

SUMMARY

Libraries are ideal places to implement TQM. They are service organizations dedicated to their customers, the patrons. By formulating a strategic plan, and following it with a commitment to continuous quality improvement, library managers can transform and improve their organizations. Riggs (1992) summarizes the notable principles of TQM: (1) manage by fact: make library decisions after careful analysis of data gathered with tools such as checksheets, histograms, and Pareto charts; (2) eliminate rework: library work is often labor intensive--simplify it and make sure it is done properly the first time; (3) respect people and ideas: staff are the library's most valuable resources, and they should be encouraged to point out problems without fear of management; and (4) empower people: trust library staff to act responsibly and give them the appropriate authority to make decisions that can improve the quality of work they do. Finally, remember that TQM is not a "quick fix." It needs to be implemented gradually over a two- to three-year period.

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