

The Content of a Useful and Reliable Organization

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The primary concern of management is to create a useful and reliable organization. The primary concern of the quality professional should be to help with the reliable part of that equation. The way to create this entity is not difficult but it does require sound philosophy and techniques. A great deal of money is expended continually on various programs to improve quality, and on corrective action activities to solve the problems that the organization faces on a daily basis. Yet things don't seem to get better, or if they do get better they don't stay that way. Programs as fads range from Knights of the Roundtable to motivation of the workers. „That which deserves to live lives“ say the philosophers. Hardly any of these programs live long. Their foundation is built on sand.

Our organization, Philip Crosby Associates II, Inc, spends its time in educating and supporting organizations around the world which are serious about becoming reliable. To make certain they are serious we have no sales people, we rely on inquiries from those who learn about us. The success rate is excellent primarily because these folks recognize that they have to change their culture, not just get certified to some system, or launch the latest program in the field.

Management and their quality professionals need to understand what they have to do if they would like to create a reliable organization where: transactions are done correctly; relationships are successful; and a large amount of money is not spent doing things wrong and over. Also what applies to a business as an organization also pertains to an individual as an organization.

Successful business organizations and successful personal lives have a great deal in common. They both have to be useful and reliable in order to accomplish their goals. Causing this situation to exist requires deliberately creating a culture of living designed to produce the desired results. This culture is constructed of a basic quality management philosophy supported by action components. Success requires that we understand and use these properly.

Scouting for Boys and Girls is an example of how this combination works in creating a personal Quality of life. We can use this analogy to better understand what it takes to create a useful and reliable organization.

The philosophy behind the Scout Organization is very clear: Scouts promise: „On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.“

There is an understandable list of requirements that make up the Scout Law: trustworthy; loyal; helpful; friendly; courteous; kind; obedient; cheerful; thrifty; brave; clean; and reverent. All these are specific and their deeper meaning is discussed in regular meetings.

The action items for the Scouts are called Merit Badges. There are at least 125 different one ranging from Agriculture to Woodwork. Traditional subjects like fire building meet up with electronics and printing. There is an opportunity to learn useful skills. Scouts are expected to learn many of them and they achieve recognition when they do. I can still remember the difficulty of learning to light a fire in a damp forest with only one match. Experiences like that build character.

Organization and professions can learn from this approach particularly when it comes to the subject of Quality. Most organizations concentrate on the „merit badge“ subjects of quality management before they get about building a culture. This impatient approach produces a „flavor of the month“ habit, which accomplishes little but keeps everyone busy. They don't seem to be concerned that very little gets accomplished as long as they are getting the „badges“. It makes me think of a football team that got very good at blocking the opponent's extra point attempts. They had a lot of touchdowns scored against them but the blocking program worked well.

Quality professionals who want their company to be known as useful and reliable have to give this thought some consideration. They can't just hop off the bridge

and hope the bungee cord works. A useful organization is one that produces products and services that customer are pleased to purchase; a reliable organization is one where transactions are completed correctly the first time, and relationships with employees, suppliers, and customers are successful. It takes a planned and implanted culture to bring that off. In today's world economy only those considered useful and reliable will survive. After all when everyone is certified to ISO or something similar, what makes companies different from each other?

Performance, that is all.

The philosophy of this culture comes from four continuing considerations: Policy; Education; Requirements; Insistence. After doing this we can use the „merit badge“ components (ISO; Black Belt; and such) which are quite valuable when installed with a company that has a sound philosophical base. For instance thousands of companies have expended the money and effort to receive an ISO certification only to find that nothing has changed. Here are the essentials of a reliable organization:

A. The Policy for quality is: „We will deliver defect free products and services to our customers and co-workers on time“. This eliminates any thought that there is permission to do things wrong. It encourages everyone to respect their customers and co-workers by doing what they said they would do. Management has to announce, publicize, and use this policy.

B. The Education provides the common language is based on what I call the „Absolutes of Quality Management“ which provide a common language for everyone involved:

1. Quality is defined as conformance to requirements.

(Most think of it as „goodness“ which becomes a matter of opinion and comparison. Goodness is impossible to communicate to all those employees and suppliers who actually perform the transactions that make the organization work.)

2. Quality is accomplished through a culture of prevention.

(Doing appraisal, no matter how scientific, means that we are bound forever in a world of corrective action. Training Knights to go slay dragons only works for a little while as the dragons breed rapidly in an environment that expects them to be around.)

3. Quality has a performance standard of Zero Defects.

(We can note that the Scout Laws do not permit deviations or nonconformances every now and then. Allowing 3.4 times per million to not be trustworthy, for instance, would undermine the integrity and credibility of the Scout. Acceptable quality levels condemn the company to the shoddy side of Quality.

4. Quality is measured by the Price of Nonconformance.

(When management sees the figures on how much it costs to do a lot of appraisal, corrective action, rework, customer service and such they become born again preventers. Twenty-five percent of revenue is a usual number for PONC. A prevention oriented culture can cut that in half in a year. A corrective actions oriented culture just piles more costs on top.)

5. The Requirements describe the work of the organization from needs down to the actual transactions of work. It is up to management to make certain that the customer's needs wind up being described by acts that produce useful and reliable outputs.

6. The Insistence comes from management, by example, showing that the policy, education, and requirements are taken seriously. They need to start and end their meetings on time, keep their word, treat others with respect, and be consistent.

Quality is a serious part of the success of any organization, if it is not philosophically integrated in the day-to-day work life it will not happen. Quality is a result, not an appendage. Management and the quality professionals have to work together to build it into the culture of the organization and then nurture it.