Preface

If we follow the evolution of quality management from its early beginnings, we find that the foundations were laid centuries ago but developed along different strands. Focusing initially on checking final product against standards in an ever-increasing quest to eliminate product failure, quality management thinking moved upwards from the work place through all disciplines until it could go no further. For many years, the supporting functions were excluded if they did not directly contribute to the achievement of product quality. But when it arrived in the boardroom it became more difficult to distinguish quality issues from non-quality issues. There emerged the concept of little "q" and big "Q". Little "q" is only concerned with the saleable goods and services and the directly related processes, functions, customers, suppliers and costs. Big "Q" is concerned with business outputs and all processes, functions, stakeholders and costs. It became apparent that every function of the business contributes to business outcomes (outputs + impacts) and that every function influenced in some way the ability of the organization to create and retain satisfied customers. It was soon realized that business survival depended on its relationships with employees, suppliers, shareholders, and society in general – that these parties all have an interest in the business and that their needs and expectations are important in the quest to create and retain satisfied customers for its products and services.

Throughout this evolution the terminology has lagged behind the thinking. Inspection evolved into quality control, which evolved into quality assurance. But this was not enough, along came Total Quality Management in an attempt to focus on big "Q" while quality assurance focused on little "q". Unfortunately TQM was not well understood and resulted in many misconceived but well meaning initiatives. It did not quite bridge the intellectual gap between quality management and general management so remained the interest of a few specialists. The EFQM Excellence Model has to some extent bridged this gap but this is an assessment framework rather than a management philosophy.

The question is whether we really need to use the word "quality" at all and that prolonging its use is detrimental to our quest. Every time we use the term quality, our listeners or readers may be thinking little "q" not big "Q".

This book attempts to take the reader on several journeys in order to explain the concepts, principles and thinking behind the tenets of quality management and the practical methodologies that have emerged to implement them. We weave a path that embraces both little q and big Q and take a detour or two to address misconceptions and alternative theories but maintain a focus on big Q. Throughout the book there is an armoury of questions, tools and techniques to enable students, practitioners and managers to build a case for change and convince top management of a need for change.

Chapters 1–3 provide an appreciation of the basic concepts that constitute the body of knowledge of quality management. Starting with stakeholders and their needs putting quality in context we then examine the meaning, relationships and dimensions of quality. We go on to examine how quality is managed, presenting the two opposing theories of managing success and managing failure and introduce the principles that underpin the management of quality. Aspects and fundamental principles of quality control, assurance and improvement are examined next including a study of variation and six sigma. Chapter 3 comprises an examination of quality management systems, the philosophy on which they are based, including misconceptions and a look at the current fad, integrated management systems, the myths and alternative theories.

Chapters 4 and 6 put forward two very different approaches to managing quality. The first in Chapter 4 shows how ISO 9000 can be used, firstly explaining its origins and putting it in context and then outlining the requirements in a way that shows how they work together to define a management system capable of producing outputs that satisfy customer requirements.

ISO 9000 and its derivatives has come to dominate discussions on quality often with adverse effects. Therefore Chapter 5 takes a look at various perceptions and misconceptions that have grown up around ISO 9000 since 1987 and the associated infrastructure. Such an appreciation is needed for anyone contemplating ISO 9000 certification.

A different approach to managing quality is addressed in Chapter 6. This is the process approach and although critics might argue that ISO 9000:2000 has been based on the process approach, the difference arises from the way the approach is defined in ISO 9000. There the approach is defined as the systematic identification and management of processes and their interactions. This definition was felt to be unhelpful as it failed to define the primary focus of effective process management. In this Chapter the process approach is an approach to managing work in which the activities, resources and behaviours function together in such a relationship as to produce results consistent with the process objectives. It is shown how the process approach to management can be used to develop the organization's mission, its strategic objectives and the processes for achieving these objectives. After explaining the characteristics of a process in detail and the principles of process management, the steps to be undertaken in developing a process based management system are described.

No excuse is made for devoting more space to process management than to ISO 9000 because in due course ISO 9000 will evolve to embrace all the tenets of process management.

A change in style greets the reader in Chapter 7. We follow the journeys of four people who discover a need for change in their organization. We derive the objectives relevant to each case and examine how top management might challenge each individual in proving the need for change. We then look at the factors involved in assessing the feasibility of change and in preparing a presentation that deals with different learning styles. Guidance is provided on the content of a presentation that is intended to gain management commitment for a project that will bring about improvement in some aspect of performance. Guidance is also provided on what to do before, during and after the presentation including help with dealing with challenges.

There are two Appendices. The first contains a list of questions that should provide food for thought and the second is a glossary of terms used in the field of quality management.

Chapters 1–6 were first published in the 5th edition of my ISO 9000 Quality Systems Handbook as background information but it was felt that they could stand alone as a general introduction to quality management. They have been revised and updated and new material added.

If you read the book from cover to cover you will discover a degree of repetition in one form or another. Hopefully this is not too irritating but it is done for a reason, that of changing perceptions. We rarely learn by a chance observation and it often requires frequent exposure to ideas presented in different forms and context before our beliefs or perceptions are changed.

My hope is that this book may reach a different audience to that of my ISO 9000 Quality Systems Handbook, possibly an audience that is more concerned with big Q than little q. We gain knowledge by asking questions and if a few executives stumble across this book and start using the principles and asking the many questions within it, it will have been worthwhile.

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