

Abstract

Quality-based Management for Future-ready Corporations Serving Society and Planet

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What are the problems quality professionals must now help solve? The question is relevant because the problems of the world have changed from those in the era of the Gurus who brought quality sciences to the rescue of worried companies. Today the future of the planet is imperiled, though many in power are in denial. Quality management can and must play a role in mitigating the new threats.

The gift of quality has been to systematically define problems and help find causes thereof. The disquieting phenomena of today are bio-extinction, climate warming, lifestyle diseases, pollution and a looming resource scarcity. Each of them has significantly been the consequence of at least seven human activities, namely, releasing greenhouse gases, discharging effluents, over-using renewable and non-renewable resources, chemicalizing everything, piling up harmful wastes, and generating radiation. The matrix below visualizes their relationship.

	Concerns	Bio extinction	Climate warming	Diseases	Pollution	Scarcity in future
Activities						
GHG		Δ	⊕			
Effluents		Δ		⊕	⊕	Δ
Non-renewables			Δ		○	⊕
Renewables		○		Δ	○	⊕
Chemicalization		⊕	Δ	⊕	Δ	
Wastes			Δ	○	⊕	
Radiation		Δ	Δ	○		

Embedded for long in the definition of quality has been the idea of causing no harm. Taguchi, for instance, defined quality in terms of loss caused to society. Nevertheless, almost every product in use today does cause harm. Products today use up fossil energy, make us ingest or contact chemicals that could impair health across generations, and when discarded, need to be incinerated, thrown into landfills, or allowed to clog water bodies, while resisting recycling or bio-degradation. These are societal problems that cannot be slotted into a category outside quality as ‘externalities’. The definition of quality must, without fuss, now read as fulfilling the needs of customers *and society*.

A core ability of the quality sciences is designing of processes and products from the point of view of the customer – read, society. Its paradigms are characterized by long-term orientation, respect for humanity, emphasis on purpose, and regard for facts, data and variation. Its methods search out better metrics and set challenging targets, while involving all stakeholders. And reduction of wastes is the bread and butter of quality. Its mechanisms enable all parts of an organization to cooperate to achieve its objectives.

Corporations have the responsibility to not harm society or the earth, though the global economic systems provide very little incentives to do so, apart from reducing waste. This is about to change, and

tougher regulations and expectations as well as environment based taxation may not be far off. Wise businessmen will do well to plan to mitigate the seven activities shown above, and thus be future-ready. There is no better way to do so than absorb and practice quality-based management. This paper elaborates the threats and the ways in which corporations can respond through quality.

Key words: Quality-based Management, Causing no harm, Society, Planet Earth