

Quality management

– top tips

Today, the adoption of quality management is a strategic decision that can help an organization to improve its overall performance and provide a sound basis for sustainable development initiatives. Put simply, quality management is about making sure that whatever you do, you do it well every time.

We've put together some top tips to help your business understand how the seven principles of quality management apply to you. These principles are based on the quality management principles from ISO 9000:2015.

1. Customer focus

The primary focus of quality management is to meet customer requirements and to strive to exceed customer expectations.

This principle may seem obvious, but actually it has an important implication: quality itself is not a fixed concept, but is defined by customer expectations. At BSI we are increasingly seeing that customer expectations around the world are changing: many now want ethical and sustainable products, for instance. So, as a business you need to find out what your customers really want by talking to them. Ask them if they are satisfied with what you are providing. Ask them if you could be doing anything better for them.

2. Leadership

Leaders at all levels establish unity of purpose and direction and create conditions in which people are engaged in achieving the organization's quality objectives. You're the boss, it's your business, you decide: where you're going, how you'll get there and who's going with you. If you work with other people make sure they know what you want, what you want to achieve and by when.

3. Engagement of people

Competent, empowered and engaged people at all levels throughout the organization are essential to enhance the organization's capability to create and deliver value. Value what people are good at, and work to their strengths. If skill, knowledge or experience is needed, make sure the person doing the job has it, or hire someone who does. If that's not an option, ensure the relevant training is available.

4. Process approach

Consistent and predictable results are achieved more effectively and efficiently when activities are understood and managed as interrelated processes that function as a coherent system. Don't muddle along or re-invent the wheel. Look at everything that needs to be done, work out how the different parts fit together and make a start-to-finish plan so that everything works.

If you're baking bread, it's not enough to just have all the ingredients. You follow a recipe. You use the right equipment. You follow precise timings. Business is just the same.

5. Improvement

Successful organizations have an on-going focus on improvement.

Quality management talks a lot about continual improvement. This can make a business owner nervous. It makes you think that you've got to grow your company year-on-year. Don't panic, that's not what quality management is asking you to do. Continual improvement means 'don't stop looking', it doesn't mean 'keep taking action'. Only make changes that work for your ambitions. Don't do it for the sake of it.

6. Evidence-based decision making

Decisions based on the analysis and evaluation of data and information are more likely to produce desired results.

How do you know if things are going well or going badly? Do you just feel it in your bones or do you have evidence to back those feelings up? Once in a while you need to stand back from the day-to-day and take a long hard look at your business from every angle. Get a big picture view of those things you've been measuring and do some cross-checking. What does the evidence tell you?

7. Relationship management

For sustained success, organizations manage their relationships with relevant interested parties, such as providers.

Talk to your customers. If you get a complaint, talk to them. If you get praise, talk to them. Find out what really matters, don't assume. If you're seeing a steady – or sudden – increase in trade, talk to your suppliers. Can they keep up with demand? If they can, is everything up to scratch or are standards slipping? Talk it through before it becomes a problem. If it already is a problem, arrange a meeting and listen to what they have to say. Then work out a new agreement. Email it to each other and keep each other in the loop about changes or concerns.

For more information

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