Quality Council Establishes Process for Setting Up Teams

During meetings held several weeks ago, the Quality Council identified a process for setting up Process Action Teams. Three different types of teams can be established:

- University-wide cross-functional teams -- for problems that go beyond the Administrative Services Division. These teams are established and chartered by the Administrative Services Quality Council, with input from the affected areas and/or the President's Council.

- Intra-divisional teams -- for problems that cross department lines but remain within the division. These teams are established and chartered by the department directors involved, with input from the affected areas.

- Intra-departmental teams -- for problems that are department or group specific. These teams are established and chartered by the department director, with input from employees within the area.

A charter is established to give the team direction. It contains such things as the team mission statement and expected outcome. It identifies the reasons why the effort is important and also describes the resources available to examine the process. The charter identifies the team's level of autonomy and contains the recognition/celebration parameters. In addition, the charter identifies the individuals asked to participate and the level of training they will be provided.

Sometimes it's difficult to determine what process to address first. "Yes" answers to these questions might help identify where to begin.

✓ Is the process essential to the operations of the unit?
✓ Does the process contribute to the mission/vision of the organization?
✓ Does the process help meet or exceed the needs of our customers?

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Tool of the Month

Structured Brainstorming

**Purpose:** To gather information on a given subject from a group of people in a nonthreatening environment.

**Description:** Brainstorming is a technique used to solicit ideas from a group of people on a given subject. Each person in a group is asked to propose a theory or idea relative to a specific issue. To encourage creative thinking and expression, no discussion or criticism of ideas is permitted, and all ideas are recorded.

**Procedure:**
1. Assemble employees who may have ideas about the issue being discussed.
2. Going around the group, systematically have each person in turn present an idea. If a person has no idea, he/she can pass until the next round.
3. On a flipchart or chalkboard, record every idea in the speaker's words.
4. Determine what action needs to be taken as a result of the discussion. Further ranking and grouping ideas is often done after the ideas have been recorded.

**Application:** Brainstorming can be used to determine processes for improvement or to identify customer needs. The technique can also be used whenever team knowledge or concerns need to be obtained, organized, discussed, and acted upon.

**Alternate Method:** Those present may be invited to speak as ideas occur to them. While this less-structured approach tends to reduce the stress level on more shy participants, it may lead to domination by the vocal participants.
They Were Doing Quality Before Quality Was "Cool"

To the employees of Printing Services, the current emphasis on quality is nothing new -- they've been focusing on it for the past 10 years.

Their goal has been to achieve customer satisfaction by producing a product that meets or exceeds the customer's needs on time and at a fair and reasonable price. Several indicators tell them they've been successful.

**Reduction in Error Rate**

Printing Services has cut its error rate from about six percent ten years ago to under one percent today.

"This is outstanding for a printing operation," says Gary Hidden of Printing Services. He further explains that most of those errors are never seen by the customer because they are detected and corrected before delivery. Hidden continues, "Every employee is, in effect, a quality control inspector insuring that no imperfect work is passed on to the next internal customer in the production cycle."

**Great Customer Satisfaction Rating**

Printing Services routinely receives a 98 percent approval rating from their customers. This rating is received from thank you/customer comment cards distributed with every completed job.

Printing Services also listens to the voice of the customer through personal contact that is made with randomly selected customers. This is done periodically to determine what can be done to better serve them. In addition, focus group sessions utilizing an outside facilitator have been held to elicit comments and viewpoints from customers who may be reluctant to provide critical information.

"None of this could have been accomplished," said Hidden, "without the skilled crafts people we have in Printing Services who take pride in their work. Their expertise and excellence at the craft of printing have been repeatedly proven by the numerous fine printing awards that have been won in national competitions over the years."