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# The Mathis Group's Messenger

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## Who Defines Quality?

The definition of quality depends upon individual views. One person's opinion may be vastly different than another's. One company may value quality regardless of the cost to the customer, while another lowers quality in order to decrease costs. Which view is correct? It just depends. What works for one company may not work for another.

The traditional view of quality is to not fix something until it breaks. As long as things look normal, everything must be fine. If you have a quality focus, however, you are very proactive when it comes to the quality of your product or service. You take preventative actions to prevent breaks or mishaps.



Now, do not confuse the quality of a product or service with the grade. A low grade is not necessarily a problem. The customer may want a product or service that is inexpensive and has limitations on function and lifespan. The quality of the item means that it is indeed what it is intended to be. A product can be low grade with high quality.

There are specific actions you can use to improve the quality of your product or service.

- Identify what will be measured
- Set baselines and benchmarks to compare measurements
- Create a plan to gather measurements
- Collect the desired measurements
- Analyze the data and compare to baseline
- Create action plans to make corrections, if needed

While these actions may improve quality, there are certain phrases to be careful of using. These phrases can kill quality involvement. Using any of these phrases may decrease any motivation for improvement or change.

- It's been done this way for years.
- That's John's job, not mine.
- We don't do it that way in our plant.
- It's been tried before.
- Our business is different.
- Let someone else try it first.
- We don't have time for detail.
- It's not practical.
- We'll come back to it later.

*(Quality Circles In Service Industries  
by Sud and Nima Ingle, 1983, p. 26)*

Good quality control produces the nine "C's" of quality.

### *Customer Awareness*

Be aware of internal and external customers. Know the different levels of customers, ie. primary (direct recipient) and secondary (indirect recipient). Knowing who your customer is and how he or she will be using the product or service will ensure that expectations are met.

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*Quality means doing what is right when no one is looking.*

*Henry Ford*

*Quality is not an act, it is a habit.*

*Aristotle*

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(continued from page 1 *Who Defines Quality?*)

## **Communication**

Communicating with the customer provides a relationship which is essential to determine requirements and expectations of the product or service. This will also set the expectations for quality levels. Understanding your customers will allow you to choose the proper quality of your product or service.

## **Cost avoidance**



A conscious effort is made to eliminate all unnecessary costs. Expenditures are restricted to necessary work for the project. Waste of time and materials are avoided at all costs.

## **Contribution analysis**

Keep a watchful eye on how the costs are distributed. The comparison of actual costs to the planned costs measure how contributions are being spent. If your actual costs exceed planned costs, you know that there are changes to be made to reduce how much you are spending.

## **Controls**

Use a system of checks and balances to ensure the project is progressing as planned. Confirm that work is being completed within the bounds of approved variances. Identify variances which will need management action, and take action when necessary.

## **Coordination**

Keeping everyone informed of process is important for the quality of the project. If all parties have a current, up-to-date knowledge of how the project is going, there will be less confusion and unnecessary changes being made.

## **Competence**

In order to do any project successfully, there must be the physical and mental capacity to perform the work. Team members must have the knowledge, skills, and attitude to complete the assigned tasks.

## **Commitment**

Each team member must be committed to the project. Total dedication to performing all accepted tasks within the time frame allotted is vital in order for the project to be completed on time and on budget.

## **Cooperation**

Cooperation is making every effort to work with others in an open and supportive manner. Assisting fellow workers, being receptive to the boss's instructions, and being friendly to others are all ways you can cooperate with your team.

Desired quality will vary by industry and company; however, knowing who your customers are, the desired outcome of your product or service, and understanding the need for dedication from the entire team will allow you to make the correct choice of quality for your product or service.



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