Nine Questions to Drive TQM Processes

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1 **What do you do or what is your job?** More specifically, can you identify your top priority job, the accountability or accountabilities ranked in order of importance to the customer? What is the objective of that job? Does the objective clearly contribute to the department's basic function?

2. **Who is your customer for what you do?** Can you clearly identify the customer for your job? Is this customer internal to your departmnent or another department within your company? Is this customer the external customer? Have you discussed his or her needs and negotiated reasonable expectations?

3. **How do you prioritize the things you do?** Given all the accountabilities you have, how do you know what to work on first? Do you consider the customer when defining your priorities? Do you look at the time constraints placed on the things you do? Do you define and give appropriate weight to each of these categories? Do you review the things you do periodically with your boss to help clarify priorities?

4. **How do you know how well you are doing?** How do you measure the performance of your job? Based on your customer negotiations, what indcators should be tracked to determine the outcome of your job? What indicators should be tracked early enough in the process to determine whether your outcome will be what the customer wants?

5. **How are you doing?** What are the results of your efforts? Do you discuss the results with your customers? Are they satisfied?

6. **What are the problem areas?** Do you have a flowchart or some other means of displaying the process? Can you identify the problem areas with data? Are you using statistical tools and techniques to track your work process? Are you tracking those process and outcome indicators discussed in number four above? Have you funneled down the problem to an area within your control?

7. **What do you do when there are problems?** Do you have a standard problem solving process which focuses on root causer analysis? How do you know that you are solving the problem rather than dealing with a symptom? Have you defined countermeasures to eliminate the problem? Have you

developed an action plan defining the who, what, how, and when the countermeasures will be put into place?

8. **When you fix a problem, how do you assure that it stays fixed?** Do you have the ability to track the results of those countermeasure you put in place to solve the problem? What efforts have you made to standardize the countermeasures? Have you developed or revisited any workflows or procedures based on the results of your countermeasures? Have you communicated these countermeasures to other areas of the company that could use them?

9. **How do you make sure that the right things are done right, every time?** How frequently do you discuss what you are doing with your customers? How frequently do you look at the process by which you do your work? Does your work require significant improvement? If so, with what data do you present your case? Can you get incrementally better at what you do? Do you need resources, training, etc.? Are you always looking to improve, regardless of how well you perform your job?

Remember: No matter what the answer you give to any one of the questions, the next question will be: <u>Can you show me?</u>