



Welcome

By Mark Rewhorn

Hello and welcome to our July newsletter.

July already! We're already over halfway through the year, we'll be thinking about Christmas parties next.

The world financial situation doesn't seem to be easing and has claimed quite a few household names. I hope that all of the readers of our newsletter have escaped the worst effects of this recession.

Yet, you know, the puzzling thing is that companies are seemingly making things worse for themselves by not looking after their existing customers. It costs a fortune to draw in fresh customers, so why not make the most of the existing ones by delivering superior customer service?

Perhaps you have a view? Why not drop by here and tell us?

<http://s1.zetaboards.com/BusinessImprovement/index/>

Very best wishes,

Mark

Listen to your customer

By An EBI Contributor

Sometimes we only hear what we want to hear! But open your ears and you can learn a lot from the customer. If you listen long enough, you will get to the truth.

There are 3 types of listening.

Active listening You are paying attention and are offering encouraging words (Yes; I see; Aha; OK, etc) and gestures, so that your customer knows you are listening. You think you understand what's being said and the customer thinks you understand.

Passive listening You simply listen without making a sound or giving any other response. The customer is not sure you have heard or listened to what he's said.

Reflective listening You listen, and then reflect back what you have been told by way of paraphrasing, but never by "parroting." The customer has a confident feeling that you fully understand what he's been saying.

Which style do you use? Perhaps recording yourself might be an "eye opener?"

Are you an aggressive, passive or assertive communicator?

Aggressive MY need is far more important than YOURS.

Passive YOUR needs are much more important than MINE,

Assertive We both have needs that must be met, let's work together to accomplish this.

Change, really?

By Marco Klootwijk

As we all know we deal with change and changes in all the extents of our life, both professional and private. The outside world is changing rapidly. Look to the massive changes in IT, mobile communication, and ways of travelling. Look to the way we can explore the universe, achieve breakthrough "improvements" of healthcare, and build structures and machines that can dig in the earth. And....

Recently I attended a course where the speaker told the following story: "Many years ago, mankind had to hunt for their food. Hunted down and with a full belly, they didn't know when and what they would have for the next meal. So the body/system/perhaps even the DNA was programmed to "keep/store" the obtained meal in body weight. These current day's people in most of the world can take food, whenever, wherever and whatever they want. At the other hand the body still "thinks": "Hey I don't know when I might get my next meal, so let's store this...".

The speaker claimed that it will take many years (even a few hundred) before the body is "reprogrammed" for the current food environment." Looking around I do see some people around me that, whatever they eat they won't get fat. Perhaps those DNA has already been adapted...?

Secondly, a famous person wrote this many years ago: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor is it the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

To start some discussion, I'll say that I think that people do want to stay abreast of change; especially when it touches personal change of ourselves.

Perhaps change is not in our DNA; perhaps it's not our nature. We like to stay in our comfort zone.

Despite all the change programs we have to work on, most of us don't like it at all but do it under "pressure".

Fearing to lose a job or whatever...In my opinion it's also the reason that many, change project/process improvements fail even when they are supported from the top.

People are always counting for their individual benefit and thus it's easier to stay in their comfort zone, rather to change because they perhaps don't know what the next comfort zone will bring...?

Here-in lies the main challenge for those who deal with implementing changes. Bring people in their new comfort zone. Guide them, treat them well, remove the barriers; understand their concerns. Keep this in mind when dealing with change. It will help to make it succeed.

Empathy

Customers don't care, unless they know that you care.

By Mark Rewhorn

Empathy is a skill of acknowledging the concerns of others. It is not necessary for a total disaster to have occurred in order to empathise with someone; it is simply a way of allowing them to know that you fully understand.

"I fully understand that Mr Jones, I think I'd be feeling exactly the same way."

"You have a valid view-point on that..."

Using empathy allows you to placate an upset customer by bringing the human aspect into play. It prevents you being seen as a hostile corporate wall; as long as you are genuine and sincere in your words.

5S on your own personal computer

By Marco Klootwijk

Many companies, mostly in a technical environment use the 5s approach to improve/ organize their working place. For those not familiar with it, 5S is a Japanese workplace organization methodology that uses the following 5S's:

- **Seiri** (Sort): Remove everything not needed
- **Seiton** (Straighten): Arrange your needs
- **Seisō** (Sweep): Clean your area
- **Seiketsu** (Standard): Everybody knows how to do the previous 3S's
- **Shitsuke** (Sustain): Maintain and review the fourth S

This time I do want to take a personal computer as example for 5S. Have you ever had an experience where you couldn't find a specific document or that you have more than one copy and you expect all to be valid...?

We haven't even talked about that fact that someone else is in need of a document from your computer. Perhaps that's why most computers are locked by a password. Fun isn't it?

OK, seriously, let see how we can apply 5s on a personal computer:

- **Seiri** (Sort): Remove everything not needed

Have you ever browsed through your computer to remove obsolete versions of documents, programs, add on's? A common misunderstanding of unlimited hard-disk space is the fact that people can put everything up upon it. Space

enough they think! I've seen many factories doing some similar. The argument; "...we might need it someday; perhaps once...."

- **Seiton** (Straighten): Arrange your needs

Make a list of programs you need. Do you have similar programs, but one has some more features than the other? Seriously ask yourself the question if you really need those two or three. I've seen people who had 5 different picture-modification programs. It could be reduced to one... Secondly, make a structure of where to find documents.

- **Seisō** (Sweep): Clean your area

If you have done Sort and straighten, run "diskfragment". Due to Sort and Straighten, the hard disk is divided into pieces, scattered around the disk. This phenomenon slows down the computer because it has to search through different parts on the disk before it has all the required information for a particular action.

- **Seiketsu** (Standard): Everybody knows how to do the previous 3S's

Make a WOW for the above. For example, monthly Sort, bimonthly Seiton. It all depends on the usage of the computer. Are you a frequent user or not? Do you produce a lot of documents and do you install a lot of programmes? If so, you might increase the frequency of Sort, Seiton and Seisō

- **Shitsuke** (Sustain): Maintain and review the fourth S

Perhaps obviously, but If you have come to step 4, the last step Shitsuke is the finalisement of the 5S and the one that keeps it all in place!

Quality Corner

By David Harris

I will write articles for each newsletter talking about the quality department, their role and the influence they have on an organisation with regards process improvements and customer satisfaction.

In my normal manner this section will have some light heartedness and of course Mickey taking. In this first edition I will look at, "The Quality Manager," and describe some of the many characters I have worked for and with and their stance of the role. I will then throw in a simple technique or tool and share with you experiences I have had using it/them.

Quality Manager – Part One

Over the years I have met many good, bad, indifferent and confused quality managers and love to talk to them about the basic fundamental role of a quality department. It spreads from, "To make sure production doesn't send rubbish product out" to "An independent support function to manufacturing." I must say the role has changed over the years along with the characters who perform it too.

So, what makes a good quality Manager.

Many years ago the QM was despised by most in any organisation, especially by the production manager. I have seen a situation so bad it became personal, which is crazy. I have been informed by many senior people that these two people cannot and should not work together; if they do something is wrong.

This is complete rubbish. Thinking back on the last 12 years as a QM I would have to say I have had a good working relationship with every production manager I have worked alongside. I would also add I am very proud to be able to say that.

The reason was I understood my and their role and respected it. I would never just sit in a office waiting for production to bring me a product to see if it was ok, and then just to flex my power and reject it without foundation; I have witnessed that situation many times. I would much rather rework a batch to get out the door to the customer and then fix the problem so it does not happen again.

Then of cause there are the bunch who kill off their supply chain. I can remember one particular person who was a complete nut case, he refused to deal with me; he only wanted to speak to the Chairman. The net result of this is that no relationship can be developed even within his department because they were not aware of the conversations between the two parties; again this guy was not respected by his suppliers or his own department.

Then you have the shrinking violets. I have met a few of these. They will reject product based on facts and data only to be over-ruled by some bully of a production manager. These QM's are normally the result of internal promotion into a position that is beyond their abilities; it can also be the result of people getting to a QM position before their time.

So, in my humble opinion, a QM should have a strong systems approach; and normally the company management representative should be very clued up on all management standards; a good internal auditor who uses this tool as a process improvement one and not a compliance battering ram, remember a good audit is a well planned in-depth one with no non-compliances raised but a number of improvement opportunities.

The QM must be able to work and support the manufacturing/ production facility, have a good relationship and still maintain the fact he/she is independent to them. The QM must be able to build a good solid working relationship with the customer base, he/she must be able to adopt the approach to the different styles and needs of the customer too.

I would like to leave this here and further development the articles of the coming months

Perhaps you'd like to drop me a line on what you think?

The Book

By David Harris

Although I am saddened by the recent Leyland Daf Vans' situation, I have hundreds of fond memories from that place and owe a life time of debt to the Managers and engineers who assisted in my development when I was promoted off the shop floor. Some of these memories through careful and structured "one to ones," others from being "shown up."

The one I remember and use today, my approach is a little toned down, is

walking into a meeting when first promoted and still wet behind the ears with no book or paper.

I can still remember we all sat down and as the meeting started the chair of the meeting asked me why I was attending the meeting? As I went to answer, he stated that how dare I attend a meeting with no intention of contributing?

I then noticed all other attendees had a book and pen to write down actions. We never had that wonderful piece of equipment called "Email" in the good old days.

I took onboard what that wise manager informed me many years ago and still monitor it now, and all I will say is the next time you walk into a meeting, have a look for the people without a book. Believe me, it will speak volumes!!!!

Cutting the Costs

By David Harris

In the current climate we are all in, I am always amazed the amount of times redundancies are made and the first department that gets chopped is the quality department. (Sparky, cool down mate).

Now, when there is a customer issue, who do they send to sort it out, the Quality Department. Whilst we are this point, who do they blame, of course, the Quality Department.

The scrap is running high, who does the MD call to ask why and what is being done? The company is awarded a new

contract and the first delivery needs walking through to ensure no defective parts are supplied, the QD again.

I could go on but no doubt my pal is walking the wall now. (Only joking Sparky.) I think in the current times bean counters should step back and understand what the organisation's values are and what they market their product on: if they always state quality and service, then maybe, just maybe, they should look a bit closer to home.

I have to say I have enjoyed the first quality corner here on EBI and look forward to developing this section of the newsletter over the coming issues.

If any members would like me to write an article relating to quality please advise me.

The customer and our attitude

By Mark Rewhorn

The Customer is the most important person in the world as far as our business is concerned. We need the customer far more than they need us; they always have a choice of using another supplier, or of simply not buying.

It is up to us to make our customers feel special and valued; sadly we don't always achieve this.

Have you ever carried out research as to why customers go elsewhere? The following is a generic set of reasons as to why customers move their business:-

- 1% will die
- 3% will move away
- 5% will move business for friendship
- 9% will move to our competitors
- 14% will move because of dissatisfaction
- 68% will move because they perceive our attitude to them as indifferent

Indifferent might mean:-

- Not listening
- Not displaying empathy
- Not delivering as agreed
- Quoting company policy... etc.

Can you really afford to lose business because of such reasons? How easily could you prevent some of these customer defections if you were to conduct a little staff training?

Perhaps simply reminding all staff of the following points might be a good start?

- The customer is not dependant on us, but we are dependant on him.
- The customer is not an interruption to our work; he is the reason for it.
- The customer is not an outsider to our business, he is part of it.
- We are not doing the customer a favour by serving him; he is doing us a favour by giving us his business.

Without the customer, we have no jobs.