



THE QUALITY CONUNDRUM

How Indian Industry is managing quality

By Surinder Kapur

Little steps towards big changes

Contribution to quality improvement takes place not only due to the implementation of best-in-class quality tools. It is also because of top management developing the right vision for building global businesses. Yoshikazu Tsuda, the Japanese professor of quality management, believes that the top Indian management has the right vision for business, the Indian worker is diligent and is executing his task well. Indian workers are open to suggestion and improvement.

There are, however, performance gaps at the middle-management level. The production manager operates in a confined environment of rules and regulations and is far too involved with his supervisory role. The problem lies with the managers not being able to keep up with the plan of the day. Tsuda has defined the functions of management, based on the level of seniority in the organisation and the way an individual needs to schedule his day to attain best results.

For instance, an operator, supervisor or a person at the shop-floor level must spend 90 per cent of his time attaining exactness. The middle manager must use 50-60 per cent of his time on continuous

improvement activities, while the rest of his time should be spent on regular activities. The top management — that is, the chief executive and the divisional head — must spend 60-70 per cent of their time on attaining breakthroughs. For instance, from 1990 to 1993, Alex d'Arbeloff, the CEO of automatic test equipment manufacturing company Teradyne, devoted most of his time to TQM implementation to attain organisation breakthrough. From 1993 to 1996, he devoted his time to developing a new product that opened a new market for Teradyne — this was a market breakthrough.

However, this is not how most

managers schedule their day. Eighty to 90 per cent of the time, managers are fire-fighting or managing their customers instead of following their day's plan. Their time is spent on tasks that are urgent, but may not be important.

Daily work management (DMW) will help organisations become more efficient, achieve better results and improve employee morale. With DWM in place, the middle manager will be able to focus and spend more time on continuous improvement activities.

Continuous improvement (CI), in regard to organisational quality and performance, focuses on improving customer satisfaction through continuous and



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incremental improvement to process, which includes removing unnecessary activities and variations. This can be termed as elimination of waste of material, time and effort.

CI is not a tool or technique but is a way of life, a cultural approach to quality improvement. The concept has to be set in the context of quality movement. The essential principles of CI are: human resources are the most important

company asset; processes must evolve by gradual improvement rather than radical changes; and

To save time, the tap-holding mandrel was split into two and the component locator and the tap