

The Importance of Communication in Quality Management

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Abstract

From a managerial perspective, communication is regarded as a process of understanding among people by means of information exchange. According to the principle “quality starts with the manager”, his role becomes crucial, one of the main traits of the manager’s behaviour being the ability to communicate effectively. Important in any aspect of quality management, communication plays an essential role in developing business projects. As a component of public relations, although less spectacular than marketing communication, quality management communication is an exciting activity, extremely useful in projects management. This paper aims to demonstrate the economic role and the benefits of using communication as a tool of quality management programs for improving the quality of organizational activity.

Key words: communication, quality, management, projects.

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1. Introduction

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach that originated in the 1950s and has steadily become more popular since the early 1980s. Culture requires quality in all aspects of the company’s operations, with processes being done right the first time and defects and waste eradicated from operations. (Padhi, 2016) Total quality management can be summarized as a management system for a customer-focused organization that involves all employees in continual improvement. It uses strategy, data and effective communications to integrate the quality discipline into the culture and activities of the organization. There is a strong relationship between good communication and successful quality implementation. A major thrust of TQM is continual process improvement, because continuous improvement drives an organization to be both analytical and creative in finding ways to become more competitive and more effective at meeting stakeholder expectations. (Choudhary et al, 2013)

Important in any aspect of quality management, communication plays an essential role in developing business projects. Starting from foundation to roof of the TQM house, everything is bound by strong mortar of communication. It acts as a vital link between all elements of TQM. Communication means a mutual understanding of ideas between the sender and the receiver. The success of TQM demands communication with and among all the organization members, suppliers and customers. (Choudhary et al, 2013) Often communication is undervalued and underestimated, and perceived as difficult. It is something that people are inexperienced in, which makes them feel uncomfortable. And, if you want people to do something, it helps a lot if you let them know what you expect from them. Communication is vital for improvement programs. It influences and supports behaviour change, and what should be done to sustain improvements, and make them last. Also it keeps the stakeholders involved, and links the improvements to the goals that they want to reach. (Linders, 2011)

It should be emphasized that projects quality management provides methods, tools and applied techniques to define the overall quality objectives, the quality objectives in each stage of the project as well as standards and quality control regulations along with a compilation of the general quality control plan. Communication processes in projects ensure the generation, gathering, dissemination, storage and ultimate disposal of information necessary for the project.

2. Communication in quality management projects

Quality management is an area where work is done under more pressure than in any other sector. Communication within quality management is not similar to classical communication, because of the specificity of this sector. For successful QMS (Quality Management System) implementation projects, the existence of an effective communication between stakeholders is a vital element.

Communication is essential for achieving the objectives of an organization successfully, including those related to quality. Internal communication should ensure the understanding of the objectives of the quality management system (QMS) and help individuals and groups to direct their efforts towards accomplishing them. (Pop, 2006)

The strategy of internal communication is not a process whose success is achieved in a single phase. The strategy of internal communication can be reduced, most succinctly, to four actions: informing, motivating, controlling and rewarding. The management's task is to ensure an effective and non-discriminatory communication acquiring knowledge of procedures and quality standards implied by QMS. Information not only contributes to a better understanding, but also to the improvement of motivation for engaging in labour.

With disciplined adherence to a system of regular and focused communication, it can be avoided the misunderstandings and delays that so frequently lead to project failure and ensure that all project staff and stakeholders are secure in their knowledge of what has to be done, and who is doing it. A Project Quality Plan relies on information about quality expectations provided by the Customer. The Quality Log is a record of quality checks performed by project staff. Both documents are necessary for effective management of product quality. (Buehring, 2009)

In order to keep the relevant people informed, it is extremely important to have regular and complete access to all information about the project, customer needs, objectives, plan, constraints, changes/risks and progress. Communication quality is repeatedly listed among the top success factors to consider when implementing a quality system. Analysis shows its role is more complex. It helps some aspect of success but has no influence on others. (Aubert et al, 2013)

Different aspects of communication quality impact different dimensions of project success. Some dimensions of project success did not seem influenced by communication quality and anyway, the form might be as important as the content of communication.

From the practical point of view, for managers, the findings highlight that communication is not a silver bullet when conducting Quality Management System (QMS) projects. Managers should also be aware that the form of the communication efforts will likely have as much impact as the content of the communication process. The results especially emphasized the importance of openness in communication.

Communication is one of the essential components of an organization's performance quality management system. Companies that provide leadership training encourage supervisors to maintain communication lines with employees who report to them. This fosters the necessary two-way dialogue that must occur during performance appraisals and improves the ability of employees to meet the company's expectations concerning quality rules. (Johnson, 2016) Quality communication is important in companies with workplace diversity. An improvement in employee morale can result from effective communication. Although money is a concern for many workers, it is not their only concern.

3. Effective communication in QMS

At the core of TQM is effective communication. For an organization to achieve its objectives and employees to maintain their appetite for work is needed not only a good, but also effective communication in order to achieve their goals. Effective communication is important for businesses looking to expand beyond its domestic borders ; it causes productivity to increase, errors to decrease and operations to run smoothly. Employees appreciate good communication coming from management. Effective communication in the workplace helps employees and managers form efficient teams and reduces unnecessary competition within departments and helps employees work together.(Barnard,2010)

Successful quality management focuses on effective communication in the project environment as a top priority. General managerial communication skills are directly related to project management communication, but without identifying with it. Communication in a QMS project provides critical links between various categories of participants (all employees in fact), ties that contribute substantially to the project's success. According to the principle "quality starts with the manager", the success of the project team depends on how well the project manager is able to structure and use the communication process. The project manager should be a communication strategist and mentor.

In quality management, human resources have an important place and communication serves as a cohesion factor if it follows a well-established plan. The main processes of communication management are:

- communication planning that ensures the identification of information and the requirements of communication between the involved parties (stakeholders);
- distribution of information;
- performance reporting: status, stage of completion of works, forecasting outcomes, etc.;
- administrative establishment: generate, collect and disseminate information necessary for the completion of a phase, report, etc.

In quality communication, the communication process gets its inputs when the management defines the needs and targets for it. The process includes the delivery of the communication product, the reception of the message, and its processing in the minds of the target audience.

Communication methods practiced within the organization play a clear role; the main ways of communication used in quality management are:

- Verbal communication: public address and other broadcasting systems and recordings;
- Written communication: notices, bulletins, information sheets, reports, e-mail and recommendations;
- Visual communication: posters, films, video, internet/intranet, exhibitions, demonstrations, displays and other promotional features. (Padhi,2016)

In quality management, communication about targets and means, for example, is internal to the organization. It is very closely linked to the organization's values and business objectives. The two interlinked forms of management expertise, i.e. quality management and communication management, aim at enhancing the business performance of the organization. In practice, it is often difficult - and even unnecessary - to distinguish between quality communication and normal business communication.(Anttila,2016)

In nowadays digital age, an Open Communication Culture (OCC) becomes an inevitable fact of doing business and is extremely important in quality assurance practice. Consistent with the quality culture and values of the organization, its leadership provides open access to information in which employees, customers, shareholders and the general public having a legitimate interest.(Foe,2013) In quality communication are also encountered some practical problems , such as :

- the responsibility of quality or communication is left to experts only;
- the obscurity and ambiguity of the concepts, most central terms in ISO 9000 standards are unclear to even many experts, mainly when translations in various languages are used;
- management does not always consider quality communication a business priority;
- communication opportunities have not been fully used.

These problems can be best dealt with by integrating the quality approach into corporate business strategies and letting quality and communication experts jointly realize the quality communication practices.(Anttila,2001)

Quality assurance is largely based on external communication. Certificates are in this case a means of achieving this. ISO TC 176, the committee responsible for ISO 9000 standards, has also expressed its concern about how quality system certificates are overused in marketing communication. The economic reality has proved that, in any circumstance, effective communication promotes improvement.

4. Conclusions

Communication is one of the most important and impacting business skills. Communication plays a significant role in connection with quality issues. Communication is an important means of realizing quality. At the same time, the actual quality of communication becomes an interesting issue. In the realizing an organization's quality approach, communication has a major part both in the quality management, in which management means are used to achieve business excellence, and quality assurance, which aims at creating and reinforcing the customer's confidence in the company's ability to supply products meeting the agreed upon requirements. Communication is crucial to achieving the successful objectives of a organization, including them and those related quality. Internal communication should ensure the understanding of the objectives of the quality management system (QMS) and help individuals and groups to direct their efforts towards bringing to achievement. With global business transactions continually increasing, the need for effective communication to meet global demands is also increasing. Therefore, communication in the field of quality management and quality assurance is a key strategy in the quality of an organization contributing to organizational culture directed towards performance.

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