

Includes The Complete
Organizational Audit Of Excellence
& Improvement Guide



Becoming EXCELLENT

Applying
The Ten Values Of Excellence
To Your Organization

Bart Allen Berry

**BECOMING EXCELLENT –
Applying the Ten Values of Excellence To Your Organization**

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Further Inquiries: BartBerryConsulting@Gmail.com

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BECOMING EXCELLENT

Applying the Ten Values of Excellence to Your Organization

By Bart Allen Berry

Introduction

Regardless of current events, the economy or changes in political administrations in America, moving your own organization towards a higher level of excellence is always appropriate and appreciated when it happens.

Volumes could be written about needed improvements in government bureaucracy – whether local or Federal. We have all been inconvenienced by businesses large and small that seem to have refined the art of delivering the mediocre. Lack of excellence can be traced back to departments inside of companies, vendors, and dare we say it? A lack of excellence with your own individual work product.

(Don't worry, you're not the only one).

The fact is, the need for a higher level of excellence is all around you and probably in front of you right now. Every organization, every product and service delivery system and every worker or manager can benefit from becoming 'more excellent'.

So what are the benefits of raising your level of excellence? If you have a business with customers, raising your level of excellence is the path to success. **Success can be defined as having an increasing number of customers that not only return to buy again but recommend you enthusiastically to others.** Bottom line is that means more business.

If you are an individual employee, your main customer is your boss or supervisor. Are they thinking of you for promotion or are they reviewing the resumes of your potential replacements?

If you are a manager of a department within a corporation, how do you mold the processes and people you are responsible for so your collective work product continues to achieve higher levels of quality, value and efficiency?

If you are in government how can you increase citizen satisfaction with what your agency provides so that they are convinced that the investment of taxpayer dollars has been a great investment?

Everyone wants their business or their service or their work product to be known as outstanding or the best, but what specifically, in detail does that really mean?

Extremely good, outstanding, superb, marvelous?

One of the problems with the concept of ‘excellence’ is that it has not been very well defined. Everyone throws around the term ‘Excellent’ – describing an excellent experience, meal at a restaurant, new technology product or customer service experience – but just describing something positively doesn’t really define it accurately. *What makes the customer’s experience ‘excellent’? What specifically causes you to use the word ‘excellent’?*

It will be revealed here in this book that the concept of ‘excellence’, in fact has ten distinct dimensions. Detailed understanding of this model and terminology takes the traditionally informal and ad hoc descriptions of excellence and puts them into a specific and *measurable* knowledge set. The utility of this excellence knowledge set can be applied to any product or service delivery system and any customer-supplier relationship – and then utilized to improve it.

The first thing to understand about the concept of excellence is this: You aren’t the one that gets to call yourself ‘excellent’. You will have achieved excellence *when your customers describe you as excellent*. Customers who describe you as excellent will also be demonstrating their positive impressions with their

behavior – by returning to your product or service again and by recommending you to others. The concept of ‘excellence’ lives within the customer-supplier relationship, and by the way, just about every relationship you can think of is a customer-supplier relationship.

This short book summarizes our excellence research and findings and presents a powerful audit tool to guide the improvement of your work, your department or your company’s product and service delivery – whether you are a sole proprietor working out of your garage or the Chairman of The Board of a multi-million dollar company.

The research-based Ten Values of Excellence presented herein, apply to any Customer-Supplier Relationship, in any industry and with any product or service. Here is a summary of the main sections of this book and the steps included in the audit and improvement process you can utilize for your own enterprise.

- 1) Fundamentals of Customer-Supplier Relationships – Where Excellence Happens
- 2) The Ten Values of Excellence
- 3) The Organizational Excellence Audit
- 4) Scoring and Interpreting Your Excellence Audit Results
- 5) Improvement Planning & Re-Measurement

Whether your customer is the single manager you report to at work, one hundred thousand retail consumers, or the single customer your entire business depends upon - using this guide will help you improve achieve and sustain better customer impressions and achieve higher return and recommend rates by becoming increasingly – more excellent. When you follow these chapters and apply this methodology to your enterprise, you will have a specific formula to create excellence. You will achieve as a consequence, greater success.

Research Background

In the interests of keeping this book short and utilitarian I will touch on the highlights of the Customer Satisfaction Research that has gone into identifying the Ten Values of Excellence.

In the mid 1990's the 'Total Quality' movement was in vogue. Inspired by names like Deming and Crosby, Shewhart, Ishikawa and Juran the quality movement emphasized statistical control, process analysis, applying the scientific method with models like PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) and integrating the voice of the customer for data driven decision making. It is this last point in reference to the 'voice of the customer' and surveying customers that our consulting firm first became involved with.

Capturing the voice of the customer in the early days of America's 'Quality Renaissance' was a fairly clunky and inefficient process that depended heavily upon pen and pencil surveys, telephone interviewing and in person focuses groups to glean actual customer experience data. While these data gathering methods varied widely when it came to quality control the gold standard at the time was to use machine readable forms – also known as Scantron Forms to be able to capture and process data by having people 'color in the bubble' on a specially formatted sheets with a timing code that could be read by an optical mark reading scanner.

While Scantron forms were quite a breakthrough for satisfaction survey administrators they had to be custom designed and printed from the Scantron Company and were often prohibitively expensive – especially when a single question edit meant you had to reprint the entire batch of surveys. Since we were a little bit geeky we noticed that the latest tools and softwares used in desktop publishing allowed us to create our own machine readable forms, and once we figured out the laborious process of programming the optical scanners to read the forms – suddenly we could do the same thing that the Scantron company did – for a lot less money.

My business partner in the Quality consulting business at the time was in charge of Quality Management at a large government Hospital and was already responsible for a huge amount of satisfaction measurement where we could test our methodology across many departments. It

wasn't long before the demand in satisfaction measurement in the private sector soon pulled us in and for a short time we became the 'go to guys' for designing and administering customer surveys for all sorts of clients and industries.

As organizational development consultants, when it came time to reveal the findings and analysis of each study, it was very easy to pair our data with improvement recommendations which of course, lead to all kinds of other work in training, planning etc. We did literally hundreds of surveys and collected mountains of satisfaction data. But the geek inside of us was not quite satisfied.

The internet was exploding at the time and we were determined to find a way to bypass the data collection process away from printed forms of any kind. As an example one of our clients was New York University where we had to code and print separate student satisfaction surveys for every class they offered every semester. That means we had to print hundreds of different sets of surveys for each class, code them so we could scan them and separate the databases, mail them to the clients, get them filled out and mailed back and then sort them (sometimes re-enter the data from a form that was mutilated) and finally get the data into a database we could work with. With 65,000 students every semester this quickly became cumbersome – and this was just one client.

Even with the efficiencies of machine readable forms we knew there was a limit to how many projects we could handle at a time – even by adding interns and new employees processing all this paper. We elected to develop our own software and a web based application that could do all of the data collection – much like the many platforms that are available today for online survey administration. We invested a lot of money and went through the slow development process of coding a brand new software monster so it could capture the data and do some instant results generation, plot statistical highlights and even populate simple radar charts – which was pretty cool technology at the time. So now the pace of our data collection and analysis could be greatly increased.

We were also teaching at San Diego's UCSD and sharing our Satisfaction models and methodology with our students who were all required to do their own satisfaction studies on the businesses of their choosing and who were required to complete comprehensive survey projects using our methodology. Many of our students chose large commercial brands from supermarket chains and restaurants to technology companies and government agencies. All this data from a wide variety of industries kept coming in and we continued to combine it into our master brain trust of knowledge about customer satisfaction and excellence.

The phenomenon we discovered was that we could see the real similarities in what customers were saying made them satisfied – no matter what the industry, product or

service. We continuously reviewed the statistical data that fell into these same patterns again and again and again.

What was also interesting as we did our organizational development consulting with various clients was that we could see the relationships between actual sales results numbers and similar factors signaling return and recommend rate and the way that these supplier's were scoring. While our eyes were bleary from data analysis we felt sure that we had some insights and knowledge that were - dare we say - 'predictive' about customer behavior when it came to customer satisfaction and what customers were saying about what 'excellence' means.

We hired an advanced mathematician to combine and correlate our humongous database (over 2 million respondents) and to confirm for us what we thought we knew about patterns of customer satisfaction. After sliding food under his door and feeding an all night caffeine addiction for a few weeks – he finally came back to us with his results. Yes – indeed we had discovered a pattern.

The results of what we found are what I call: 'The Ten Values of Excellence', which in effect means that, Customers will behave more favorably (return & recommend) when the supplier scores highly in each of these ten areas which combine to create an 'overall score' or impression of excellence representing the customer's overall satisfaction experience.

We also discovered that Customer Satisfaction is a holistic experience and that the Supplier must give attention to each of these ten areas. We found that scoring low in any one of these ten ‘values of excellence’ can sabotage the overall level of satisfaction score, and thus influence customer loyalty behavior. In effect, what we discovered were the ten areas you need to pay attention to and how you have to score to get customers to describe you as ‘excellent’.

Interestingly, we were able to apply our scoring system (1 to 10 likert scale) to each of the values of excellence and we were able to correlate scores with customer return and recommend rate behavior. That means we can broadly predict the extent to which a customer will return to buy again or recommend your business to others based upon these scores, and how their attitudes and behaviors will change when you don’t score as well and rate you as excellent. This is the basis for the audit of excellence process presented in this book.

So why is Customer return and Recommend Rate so important? ***R&R is arguably the most important business metric in any customer supplier relationship.*** And once again, every relationship is a customer supplier relationship.

You might be a retail business that depends upon a local customer base where you need repeat business to be profitable. Perhaps you have local competitors and they are scoring higher than you in one or several of the Ten

Values of Excellence. Where do you think your customers will be shopping? What is presented here is critical strategic knowledge for your enterprise. You will find that you resonate with each of these values and are probably already applying many of them instinctively to what you do.

Even if you don't directly interface with customers in an industry like retail or hospitality, your individual work product or that of your department inside a larger company has a customer- or maybe your boss or another department who receives your work product is your only customer. These same values will still apply. The comprehensive nature of the Ten Values of Excellence is that these values will apply to a lot more than simple front line customer service. In fact this audit can directly or indirectly touch nearly every aspect of a business operation. What is offered to you here is a comprehensive system and methodology that will insure you are looking at all of the important areas, creating a current baseline impression of how you are doing now, and guiding your improvement efforts so that you may increase your level of excellence.

While it seems like the subject matter here focuses on Customer Satisfaction – as it does, the topic is Excellence. It is important to remember again that 'Excellence' is defined by your customers. You can call yourself anything you want, but unless you are scoring high across the board in each of the Ten Values of

Excellence, your customers will not be relating to you as if you are excellent.

To help us get on the same page, The Ten Values of Excellence are:

QUALITY EXCELLENCE

VALUE EXCELLENCE

TIMELINESS EXCELLENCE

EFFICIENCY EXCELLENCE

ENVIRONMENT EXCELLENCE

CONNECTION EXCELLENCE

CONNECTION EXCELLENCE

SELF MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE

TEAMWORK EXCELLENCE

INNOVATION EXCELLENCE

We will review the complete definitions and sub constructs of the Ten Values of Excellence in *Chapter 2*.

Another insight from our research was discovering that customer behavior essentially fell into three major categories – Dissatisfaction, Indifference and Satisfaction.

On our 1 to 10 scale overall, we discovered not surprisingly, that as customer behavior decreased (when they perceived the supplier a ‘not excellent’), they became increasingly dissatisfied and even irritated, resulting in a negative return and recommend rate effects.

Overall scores of 4.2 or lower meant that not only were customers not going to patronize the supplier, but they were actually telling other customers not to do so as well- on an increasing basis as scores get lower.

Obviously this is a disastrous effect for a business, an individual worker or manager when they are perceived as ‘not excellent’ and lies at the heart of the formation of a negative reputation.

We were also able to identify patterns of mediocrity. The Zone Of Customer Indifference correlated with patterns of the lack of customer loyalty. While customer perceptions were not necessarily negative when scores ranged from 4.3 to 7.9, customers expressed no preference and had zero predictable return and recommend rate. While customers might utilize a supplier who is mediocre because of one or two positive attributes such as nearby location, fast service etc. their loyalty as customers was fickle and they were vulnerable to being stolen by a more satisfying supplier.

The interesting threshold for positive customer return and recommend rate to occur was surprisingly high at 7.9 on a scale of one to ten. An important insight from our

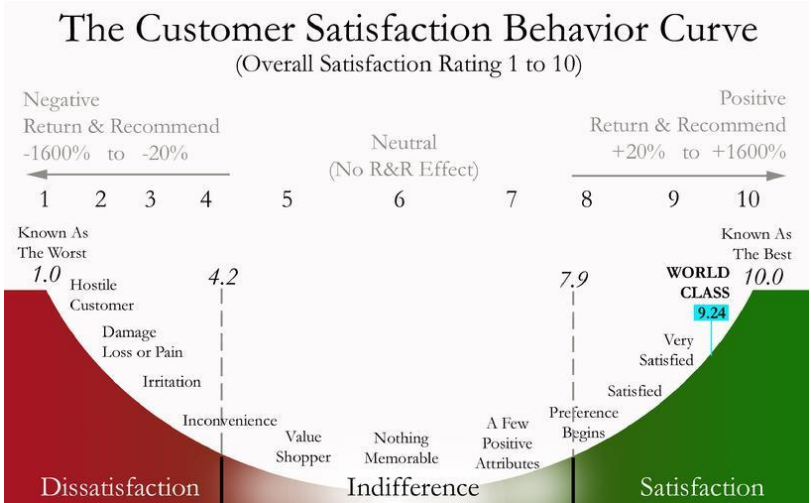
analysis was that suppliers had to score relatively high to achieve any positive return and recommend at all but that return and recommend rate behavior then increased nearly exponentially as scores increased.

Measureable return and recommend rate goes way beyond 100% and can reach as high as 1600%. That means essentially that customers are telling customers who are telling customers who are telling customers about their satisfaction and the excellence of the supplier.

In this day of social media broadcasting a single Facebook post about a positive experience can reach thousands of people. According to our research, 'Excellence', being described as 'World Class', and 'Known as the best' correlates with overall scores of 9.24 or higher.

Scoring a ten in each of the Ten Values of Excellence for a perfect overall score is nearly impossible for any enterprise, and still something we have never seen, but achieving a score as high as 9.24 means that each of the Ten Values of Excellence have been given great attention resulting in very desirable customer impressions.

See the Customer Satisfaction Behavior Curve Below:



So in summary, we have seen that ‘Excellence’ is defined by customers who are looking for very specific things that combine to form the complete customer experience impressions of your product or service as the supplier.

These quantifiable and measurable impressions in ten specific areas will determine how a customer will behave, what they will be saying about you and ultimately- the extent to which you will be known as ‘excellent’.

Chapter 1. The Customer-Supplier Relationship – Where Excellence Happens

The terms customer and supplier are used throughout this book to describe the roles of the ‘Supplier’- the one providing the product, service, benefit etc. and the ‘Customer’, the one buying or receiving the product or service. Healthcare provider and patient, mechanic and car owner, government employee and citizen tax payer, software designer and computer user – you get the idea.

The relationship between these roles is a dynamic one, but it is worth examining to see how the Values of Excellence are integrated to enhance this relationship to create success and satisfaction,

Or

Where they are lacking- precipitating a relationship breakdown.

The customer-supplier relationship contains an assumed contract between the parties.

The customer wants or needs to get something from the supplier, and the supplier wants or needs to give something to the customer. The degree to which the supplier demonstrates The Ten Values of Excellence will determine the level of satisfaction in the customer experience and whether or not the relationship will continue and repeat over time, and whether the customer will recommend the supplier to other potential customers. The Ten Values Of Excellence are the framework for customer-supplier relationship excellence.

Customers want to have a relationship.

Few suppliers start out with an understanding of this basic assumption. Customers expect the supplier to welcome their business and to be prepared and geared-up for serving their needs. They expect the supplier to want to discuss their needs and to take an interest in their situation.

The supplier needs to understand that this relationship starts out with a positive expectation from the customer. The supplier is always in the position to demonstrate their willingness to participate in a win-win relationship, but without appropriate attention, may drop the ball before the relationship can ever begin.

To be effective, supplier's need to be proactive about establishing and maintaining a relationship with their customers-- over as long a period of time as possible.

The Excellence Value of 'Connection' (being open and available, convenient and easy to connect with), Environment (having a clean and safe warm and welcoming place of business), and Self Management (courteous and attentive pleasant front line customer service) will help communicate openness and receptivity from the first positive interaction with a new customer that immediately starts the relationship off on the right foot. Even when customers are doing digital business with an automated website, the design of the experience can still effectively communicate excellence so even a positive digital relationship is created and supported.

The first interaction is of critical importance to the establishment of the kind of relationship the customer wants to have.

The importance of the win-win relationship.

In a win-win relationship, both parties benefit. This should be the actual target and goal of the supplier. Rather than just maximizing profit with a customer once, the supplier is potentially setting up the basis for ongoing sales - or in the case of a customer only buying once- a reputation for a quality experience that this customer will share with others.

In a Win-Win relationship the customer gets their needs met with a high level of quality, value, efficiency, courtesy etc. and the supplier gets compensated with a contract, wages, votes or other reward. Win-win relationships tend to repeat themselves, and are the only type of relationships that are sustainable over time. Fundamentally, the supplier should be continually evaluating the way they are relating to their customers-- would this feel like Win-Win to me? Consciously or unconsciously your customer will conclude their transaction with a good feeling, confidence in the Supplier, an impression of excellence or regretfully, something else. As a supplier do you start out with the idea of a win-win relationship?

Every advertisement, retail sign, TV commercial, internet banner ad, or political campaign speech is an invitation to "Come and have a relationship-- we will provide what you want or need". The premise is always that this will be a win-win relationship. If you vote for me I will do this for you, if you buy this car you will get quality, value, dependability, etc. In an ideal world, every transaction would result in suppliers totally fulfilling their promises and meeting or exceeding customer expectations. If this really happened we would only need one supplier in every industry. Membership in the club of suppliers that create real excellence in the eyes of customers is in reality, quite rare.

Win-win relationships are reflected in the 'Zone of Satisfaction' on the Customer Satisfaction Behavior

Curve (7.9 or higher) and are characterized by customers who return to buy again, and provide referrals and unsolicited testimonials with increasing intensity as their satisfaction increases. A World Class Excellent Supplier (9.24 or higher) enjoys close to a 1600% return and recommend rate because their satisfied customers are telling everyone, and those folks are telling others, who are telling others because the product, service, management, leadership, talent, work etc. is excellent! These are also known as unsolicited testimonials.

People talk about the really great things that they experience in their lives from the new movie to a great restaurant. Customers who rate the supplier as World Class really feel like they are winning in the relationship. When levels of satisfaction are not achieved, return and recommend slips, and the relationship begins to deteriorate from preference or a feeling of win-win to indifference, and eventually dissatisfaction (Win -lose).

The deteriorating relationship.

The customer satisfaction behavior curve clearly illustrates the rapid fall off of customer loyalty that happens as customers become less satisfied and when suppliers are perceived as less than excellent. It is interesting to note that as satisfaction drops below 7.9 (the zone of satisfaction) the customer drops into a wider zone called the zone of customer indifference.

The Zone of Customer Indifference does not mean that things are all bad; it just means that fewer things are really good. Customers may patronize a particular business because of one or two strong features- lowest prices despite an inconvenient location and messy store, a gas station close to home despite having higher prices, or an expensive clothing store with really warm and friendly staff.

In an especially busy area with lots of potential customers, or an area where there is no competition, these suppliers might be able to sustain themselves over time- in fact many retail chains are designed to leverage a single feature such as a convenient location or everything under one roof at a shopping mall. The incumbent may be re-elected simply because there are no better choices available. The boyfriend will keep his girl friend until a better one comes along. But none of this has anything to do with excellence.

Customer indifference however, means vulnerability for the supplier.

When they aren't satisfied, voters look for alternate candidates, local restaurant patrons consider trying a different eatery, long time GM loyalists start looking at Volkswagens, or employers paying closer attention to the new resumes that come across their desk.

As satisfaction levels get lower and lower customer supplier relationships become more tenuous, and customers looking for higher levels of satisfaction naturally migrate to other suppliers. The supplier becomes vulnerable to more and more competitors and as satisfaction levels drop still further, customer relationships can sink into the Zone of Customer Dissatisfaction.

The negative relationship.

When customers find themselves very dissatisfied with a supplier, losing business is not the only negative effect. As satisfaction levels drop below 4.0 customers go from disappointed to irritated to mad to actually becoming a dedicated enemy of the supplier. None of these things are good when negative word of mouth, public announcements of dissatisfaction, industry association complaints, lawsuits or even worse can result. All of these will hurt business and create a bad reputation that no supplier wants.

The Win-lose relationship

It's hard to call this a relationship, because the customer will run from this supplier after a single transaction. It is continually amazing how many suppliers operate routinely with a win-lose relationship model. Bait and switch, car repair rip offs, unjustified cell phone bills,

irrational medical insurance rate increases, politicians who do the opposite of what they promised once they're in- there are too many examples.

The supplier who can't compete with a commitment to excellence might decide to get what they can from a single transaction, with no hope or plan for a future relationship of any kind. Although the win-lose relationship is unsustainable over time, short term gains by the supplier at the expense of the customer create animosity, and adversarial relationships between customers and suppliers develop for entire industries because of lack of trust that happens when customers repeatedly 'get the shaft'.

Stuck with your supplier.

Win-lose relationships are especially frustrating when the customer has to deal with a single supplier that abuses the customer-supplier relationship by delivering poorly across the range of the Values of Excellence. Cell phone companies that surprise you with extra charges and penalize you for canceling your contract, local cable TV where you only have one choice of company in your neighborhood, or a health plan that doesn't let you schedule more than one appointment a month--these are all examples of suppliers who leverage these sole option/sole source positions.

Suppliers like these, who can avoid competing head to head with another supplier to keep a customer's business, are strategically in the position to consistently take

advantage of the customer. Corrupt monopolistic practices force win-lose or no choice options on the customer. It's no surprise that customers don't like this because the chances of obtaining the excellence they want is virtually nil.

Customers have little recourse besides a painfully inadequate legal system when it comes to consumer protections. Reporting a bad supplier to the better business bureau has little effect these days.

Free markets and competition create higher levels of excellence.

One of the healthiest things the American economy can do to help itself is to empower competition. When markets are truly fair and open, levels of excellence will increase because of competition, resulting in better choices for the customer. Suppliers have to continually evaluate their offerings to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty and have their excellence shortfalls more evident when there is competition.

Relationships take work.

As any marriage counselor will tell you, all relationships have their idiosyncrasies. Tolerating mistakes is easier if there are other admirable qualities there and the other in the relationship is doing their best to make an effort. Things seem to work out better when there is a sincere effort to maintain the customer-supplier relationship, and to do some things right that exceed expectations. Everyone appreciates this. Customers can become

partners in helping the supplier learn what they need to do to raise their level of excellence.

All relationships are customer supplier relationships

In every human interaction, one is the customer; one is the supplier-- your spouse, your friends, your kids. Of course these personal relationships switch roles back and forth often, but the Ten Values of Excellence can easily be extrapolated and applied to relationships outside of business and work. If things have not been going well in one of your personal relationships you might want to review the Ten Values of Excellence list again - with your personal relationship in mind.

The next chapter will cover the definitions of Ten Values of Excellence in detail. Each of the ten values has several sub-constructs to describe its different aspects.

Chapter 2. The Ten Values of Excellence

You will find nearly every aspect of customer satisfaction represented in the following Ten Values of Excellence. It is helpful to think of brands or organizations you admire as being the best such as Rolex, Mercedes Benz, Sony, Pebble Beach Golf Course etc. as you learn about each of these values. Inevitably, you will also be thinking of your own customer experiences where each of these values was outstanding or lacking.

As you review each of the values of excellence and their definitions below, you might also begin to think about how each will apply in your own situation at work or business. That will be good preparation for the next chapter which includes the full detailed Organizational Audit of Excellence where you will evaluate what you do in specific detail.

The following Ten Values of Excellence are presented here from our research.

QUALITY-

For the highest quality, customers expect consistency with zero defects, mistakes, or inaccuracies.

Getting exactly as ordered, no blemishes, the right count, the correct model, the latest version- all as promised- every time.

Perfection is a nice goal, and it is not as unrealistic as you think. Manufacturing quality control standards in many industries today are one mistake per million parts - and that is statistically attributable to special cause variation (an unavoidable or un-anticipatable cause).

What this means for six sigma-oriented manufacturers is that they have controlled every variable in the process to an extreme level. They watch the quality, they measure and analyze the quality, they adjust until they consistently get the quality they are looking for- and then push it some more.

In this scenario, by the time a product gets to a customer, there is virtually no chance that it will have defects.

Although manufacturers do this every day, how many industries outside of manufacturing can make such quality control claims? The automobile industry is an example of efforts to achieve super high quality standards, which is a major accomplishment considering the sheer number of variables that must be managed, and tested for each part, and then which must work well together as an integrated whole in the average car today. Even with the latest auto recalls it is truly amazing that

something with so many parts could work so consistently most of the time. Because of fierce competition in the auto industry, the expectation of quality and dependable performance from every automobile is something customers have come to expect.

Designing product and service delivery so they are consistently accurate means a lot to the customer. Are you the type of supplier that delivers with mistakes and expects the customer to ‘take it in stride?’ Are your processes and systems set up to check and double check what you do so you have the assurance to know that you are always delivering quality without defect?

It is unconscionable that some suppliers actually ship products they know will contain a certain percentage of defects and chalk it up to the cost of doing business. These suppliers are not known as excellent.

Customers want it right the first time.

Customers want their product or service to function as promised correctly the first time. We've all tried to assemble a present on Christmas morning, downloaded a piece of software, or got a different airline seat than what we reserved, and were disappointed. An accurate report for your boss, shipping the correct part number, playing the right song for the first dance at the wedding, matching the color of the paint correctly, serving the main course with the correct side order, spelling the

customer's name right, or getting the amount correct on the invoice –these are just a few examples of getting it right the first time.

The customer wants the quality of the product or service provided to be consistent with the best available.

The theme of 'benchmarking' will be repeated throughout the excellence lexicon. The idea of the customer's perception of quality is largely based upon what he knows or has heard about or seen available elsewhere. Comparisons are also very important to your competitiveness as we will see in a later chapter. If you are on your game, you will know your competitor's level of quality and be familiar with how what you provide compares to what else is out there.

Quality can be defined by thousands of different words, depending upon the product, service or industry:

Oldest

Newest

Original

Darkest

Reddest

Limited Edition

Warmest

Softest

Hardest

Most Exciting

Most Tranquil

Most Remote

Nearest

Exotic

Traditional

Simplest

Complex

And so on...

Each of these words as a descriptor can be used to identify a benchmark for an excellent product or service. A Volkswagen is still compared to a Mercedes even if they are not in the same class as automobiles. When products are more similar in comparison, such as a Nissan Maxima and a Ford Taurus, detailed product delineations and differentiation become more important as the perception of what one pays and one gets between the two brands is not all that different.

Today's customer is often very well informed with feature by feature comparisons and very well prepared with logical rationale about what they should be getting for their money. Supplier's today must be well prepared to perform specific comparisons between what they offer and the benchmark of the highest standard offered by a competitor.

Intangible Attributes of Quality

"Oh but my dear, that's Pierre Cardin!" Whether we are susceptible to the peer pressures of popular brand consciousness, customer perceptions of quality can be strongly influenced by these artifices. Surely the Wal-Mart handbag will carry as much as the Pravda bag right? Why is one thirty times more expensive than the other?

Suppliers carefully cultivate brand images of exclusivity, tastefulness, etc. As an intangible attribute of quality.

This careful marketing strategy can be difficult to compete with when your six year old throws a tantrum in the store because you don't buy the doll she saw on the commercial. The same is true of golf clubs, shoes, tools or corn flakes. This dimension of quality in the eyes of the beholder gets more psychologically complex when you bring home the 'name brand' product and it doesn't live up to its reputation- or what if, God forbid, it is so 'last year'. The implications of this form of consumer

neurosis are beyond the scope of this book and not included in the research about customer satisfaction and excellence.

Although many organizations are reaching for the market share and profitability that comes with being excellent in the eyes of customers, this position cannot be achieved or sustained by leaning too heavily on intangibles and pure branding without substance when it comes to quality. It is far better to earn a genuine reputation for durability, functionality, beautiful design etc. rather than having to recover from 'over the top' claims that were not fulfilled by your actual product or service.

The customer expects everyone in the supplier's organization to have general systems knowledge, know their own product line and be familiar with the latest developments in the organization.

Even though you may be the representative in your office who deals directly with the customer, your secretary or anyone else who answers the phone should also have an idea of 'what goes on around here'. Support personnel are a reflection on the quality of an organization and can make or break a customer relationship without you ever finding out about it. Knowing the product line and where to find things is another point.

How many times have you gone into a department store and the retail clerk couldn't tell you whether or not they carried something or where it might be? Asking where

to find plumbing fixtures at the hardware store shouldn't require a consult with three different employees. Many of us can recall knowing more about an upcoming sale than the person in the store waiting on us. In actuality, everyone in the organization is on the quality team. Excellent organizations understand this and understand that perceptions of quality are created by how well trained their personnel appear.

In summary, Excellence in Quality means you will setting the standard for consistency and accuracy, a level of quality comparable with the best, with all support personnel well- trained to support the delivery of quality in the product or service line.

VALUE-

The customer wants the best price that is available.

Each of us has a sense of fair play and no one likes to be taken advantage of. Shopping has become an art for some who enjoy chasing the lowest price. Many have personal Ego's that need to feel like their ability to negotiate or bargain will make a difference in the final price paid. No one likes to find out that the same item or service was available at a dramatically lower price somewhere else or even online, after they have made a purchasing decision.

Whether accurate or not, most of us start out with some sort of feeling or 'price range' of what something should

cost. Usually this is based on actual or anecdotal pricing information for at least a similar product or service we have seen before. This is the departure point for evaluating whether or not something is a fair price. Pricing is a careful game and the supplier needs to know if and be prepared to defend why a particular price may be higher than a competitor's.

Purchasing agents everywhere are tasked with managing supplier negotiations to get costs as low as possible. If you are the supplier you may be asked by purchasing agents to make concessions not only on price, but on payment terms as well. Great relationships with vendors are part of a pricing strategy that will ultimately affect what the customer will pay – and their perception of whether or not the supplier's products and services are a good value.

In today's economy, there is no longer a guarantee that automatic annual price increases will be accepted by your faithful customer; in fact the current trend is to freeze or even lower prices in subsequent orders. Manufacturers are under incredible pressure to cut costs in light of lower cost competitors from overseas. Critical business decisions often involve the tradeoff between profit (or breaking even) and maintaining customer loyalty.

The customer wants the price paid to be historically appropriate based upon the price paid in the past.

From disproportionate increases in gas prices to shocking jumps in health care costs and airfares, customers don't like it when their sense of predictability is violated when it comes to how much they are expecting to pay. This is one of the surest roads to customer dissatisfaction.

Monopolistic corporations like oil companies and airlines can get away with unexpected price jumps, but at the risk of real animosity from customers. In industries like these, customers immediately jump to a lower cost provider with no brand loyalty whatsoever-- and rightly so.

The Customer doesn't want his money wasted.

Whether it's the company expense account, Federal tax dollars, home owner's association dues, or start-up venture capital, the customer wants to see a degree of due diligence that assures them their hard earned money is being spent responsibly. The customer will project his own conservative and frugal values onto the supplier who would be smart to illustrate this careful handling of funds. Customers assume that their excellent supplier is doing the same due diligence on managing their resources that the customer would do themselves.

Excellent Suppliers are not afraid to make concessions or provide additional value to maintain the Customer-supplier relationship.

Smart business means when a customer is happy they are that much closer to being extra happy. Giving in a little, or adding extra perks, short of unethical bribery of course, is always welcomed and can go a long way towards creating positive word of mouth from satisfied customers who become very satisfied customers. This is actually a dimension of 'Commitment' discussed below but contributes to the perception of value excellence.

The customer wants the product or service to remain a good value long after the sale.

Good buying decisions demonstrate themselves over time. Excellent products and services that have been designed with a long term perspective become ubiquitous classics, and continue to act as brand emissaries year after year. Think of the old classic Mercedes, the dependable work horse laser printer, Craftsman hand tools with a lifetime guarantee. Long term brand satisfaction leads to generational relationships with a supplier. "We have always been a Ford family" etc.

'Value' excellence means that the supplier will be an advocate for getting good value out of money spent, spending responsibly and negotiating fairly whether buying or selling. Pricing is set in reasonable terms compared with competitors and is historically appropriate. Excellent products and services demonstrate their value over a long period of time.

TIMELINESS-

The customer wants the delivery of the product or service and all interactions with the supplier to be on time.

In this frenetic world, everyone has a lot to do. Being on time is a professional standard that communicates respect for the customer's time, and the fulfillment of an agreement to be at a specific place, at a specific time, to deliver the product or service at the time specified by or promised to the customer . Excellence means being early, or on time. Being late is not an excellent behavior, and not meeting critical customer deadlines has the potential to 'crash the plane' of any customer supplier relationship.

When timeliness is a heavily weighted value of excellence, Suppliers need to be careful what they promise. The challenge is to demonstrate a commitment to the customer and fulfill their needs, but to do so within the supplier's realistic capabilities. The temptation is to 'over promise' to get the business, but missing a delivery date may cost you the relationship -- and the accompanying value of the life of the customer relationship over time.

The customer wants to take the minimum amount of time to get their needs met.

Excellent processes, systems, and interactions with customers are designed with minimum wait times, adequate staffing to handle multiple customers, and optimized transactions that take only as long as necessary.

Fast food restaurants, while not necessarily known for excellent quality, are a great example of processes which have been totally optimized for the convenience of the customer when it comes to timeliness. The customer stares at the large well lit menu positioned up high where he can see it while in line so when they get to the counter they are prepared to order. Most popular menu choices are grouped and reduced to a short choice of #1, #2, #3 etc. and the clerk hits a single button to execute the transaction.

A continuous production of the most popular items is always in process with a set number of sandwiches, fries etc. ready to be instantly bagged at any time. A cup is handed to the customer to fill their own drink, and even though the customer may make a mess at the soda fountain, or may refill his cup many times, the restaurant has calculated that this is cheaper than losing a customer because of impatience with waiting in line again for a refill, or the time it takes for clerks behind the counter to pour yet another drink – allowing them to get to the next customer transaction faster.

It is relatively easy to control timeliness in repeatable processes which are fixed with little variation, and fast food restaurants have clear incentives to continually optimize transaction processing to fit as many lunch orders in as possible into the limited 'lunch rush' timeframe. Fast food establishments know their food may not be the most gourmet variety, but the quality and value proposition, as well as convenient location make it attractive enough for the customer. These same restaurants know that they can't make customers wait in line too long or their 'attractive enough' offering will lose its appeal since there are many other options available for customers to migrate to.

Most suppliers aren't used to looking at everything they do as repeatable processes, but those concerned with achieving excellence might need to start. Every organization will benefit from time and motion studies and root cause analysis to find ways of optimizing and adding efficiencies to what they do.

Customers often prefer to shop where they can get in and get out fast. This is why they're called convenience stores (the department store shopping experience might be something different as an experience unto itself, so many mall shoppers will tell you). Customers resent waiting in line, especially when there are ten check stands available and only two are staffed with cashiers. Lean staffing decisions by store management send the message that the customer's time is of secondary importance.

When staffing decisions or other business trade-offs need to be made, the excellent suppliers push the burden to other resources behind closed doors, out of view of customers, and think hard about cutting front line staff rather than negatively impacting the customer experience in terms of timeliness.

The Customer wants the supplier to take all the time required to achieve satisfaction.

The flip side of the coin with timeliness is that there is a danger in going too fast. Shortchanging the customer by pushing him along too fast or not spending the time with them to fully understand and fulfill their needs can alienate the customer who might want a deeper interaction. Spending more time with customers is strongly related to the Value of Commitment (see below).

Excellent suppliers make timeliness a priority, maintain benchmark standards of on time appointments and delivery, optimize processes and systems so little, if any time is wasted, and make it a priority to spend more time with customers when necessary to achieve desired results.

EFFICIENCY-

The customer wants optimized processes which are as simple and linear as possible.

In these days of increased productivity there is no excuse for redundancy, non-linear processes, and inefficient systems design. Wasting time and energy because you haven't thought of a better way to do things is a poor excuse. We've all been to a bureaucratic government offices and been sent here and there, to come back for multiple appointments, only to find out that what you really needed was something else entirely etc.

Customers want processes to make sense. The minimum number of steps, requiring the least amount of effort is the excellence ideal.

One is lead to believe that the bigger the organization, the more inefficient, when it is precisely the opposite that is needed. Organizational cost cutting seldom considers the impacts on process efficiency. Each individual's job description, each department's day to day processes, each company's front line customer transactions and back of the house vendor relations need to be examined critically and continually to see what steps can be optimized, re-ordered, or eliminated completely. A commitment to finding more efficient ways of doing things (without sacrificing customer requirements or satisfaction), will yield its own cost savings in areas previously unconsidered.

Customers want a single point of contact.

Customers dislike telling their story many times to different account managers, or being passed from one department to the next. When customers return again they want to pick it up where they left off with the representative they talked with previously, not someone else. They want to deal with one person, one time that is qualified to fulfill their requirements in a single interaction.

This is a worthwhile standard to shoot for in any customer-supplier transaction.

Excellence means process optimization and continually increasing efficiency as routine, giving attention to internal process efficiencies as well as those processes customers must interact with.

ENVIRONMENT-

The customer wants the supplier's environment to be clean, well organized and aesthetically pleasing.

A well organized environment provides assurance that the supplier has their act together. A disheveled, dirty, disorganized work environment immediately suggests a lack of confidence in the supplier.

Although standards of cleanliness vary widely from industry to industry-(the cleanliness and organization standard of a car mechanic is different than that of your

dentist for instance), there is a benchmark for cleanliness in each industry and it seems a simple thing to observe the common standard for the business you are in- and then to set your sights on exceeding it to reflect excellence.

Excellence means implementing higher levels of organization, cleanliness, and aesthetics. This is a tangible feeling one gets the first minute they enter a World Class business. The environment feels pleasing to the customer.

The customer wants to feel safe physically, in the supplier's environment.

Safety should never be an issue, but customers are regularly exposed to physical risks from exposure to coughing employees who should have stayed home, icy steps to enter the building, dangerous equipment they might be injured by, or even confrontations with unsavory characters at the corner bar.

Excellent Suppliers anticipate safety risks and clearly understand that an injury to a customer automatically turns them into a source of dissatisfaction and negative dialogue that will spread to many, potentially effecting a reputation for some time to come - not to mention

potential liability exposure concerns. Customers appreciate having their safety looked after, and this is another way to demonstrate Commitment in the customer-supplier relationship (see below).

Psychological safety means making customers feel welcome, accepted and comfortable.

If you have been to a traditional Japanese Sushi restaurant, they often make a big deal about welcoming you and greeting you when you sit down at the Sushi counter. This makes customers feel immediately acknowledged and respected, emphasizes a willing serviceful attitude and lets the customer know that the staff are specifically there to serve their needs. How many businesses could benefit from this approach?

Often it is the customer that must facilitate their own satisfaction by having to gingerly sweet talk or somehow manipulate an intimidating or irritating front line worker to get their needs met rather than experiencing an easy welcome feeling. Sour employees with a disdain for their own job or other negativity can give off a vibe that makes customers feel uncomfortable and tarnish an otherwise excellent experience. Some employees are just downright rude and mean. Customers should never be exposed to negative moods in the workplace from any of the supplier organization's personnel- especially when it creates an uncomfortable atmosphere or environment.

Excellence means creating well organized, safe, aesthetically pleasing and psychologically welcoming environments including hiring and training front line staff that make it a priority to make customers comfortable.

CONNECTION -

The customer wants to be able to access the supplier's products and services easily.

Store or office location, hours of operation, and ease of parking are factors that need to be organized based on the customer's convenience. Even banks are recognizing the importance of this and are putting bank offices in supermarkets, opening on Sundays and have increased use of internet transactions 24/7.

Being accessible by customers means increasing use of the internet to be searched for and found. Websites, blogs, digital media such as video, RSS feeds, chat and other various online events can all be utilized to share information, teach, communicate and interact with customers to give them more of what they are looking for.

Some suppliers miss the boat when they only have an email form for customers to fill out to make contact with them. We have all seen the forms that try to corral the customer into sharing their contact information and perhaps choosing one of several reasons for their

communication- instead of what they really need. Many customers simply move on to the next supplier rather than taking the time to fill out an impersonal form. If you are going to use a customer communication form, also clearly list an email address. Maybe the two million dollar order isn't one of the choices available on your pull down list.

Increasing use of social networking makes sense as a way of adapting to where customers are found, making it easier for them to find you. Social networks typically participate in several dimensions of social media, taking their experience with them as they move from face book and twitter to Yahoo and Gmail, linked-in and hundreds of other specialized internet sites and blogs. New ground in being able to virtually connect with customers is being pioneered as we speak and is one of the most exciting customer relationship technology opportunities today. If you don't have a Facebook page, no matter what your business, you are missing the boat. It is simply amazing how many small companies are dispensing with traditional websites and marketing solely on social media sites because it puts them directly in contact with customers.

Clear pathway signage can help customers find the supplier.

From billboards on the highway and office complex directories to main street business information kiosks and arrows literally painted on the floor in the case of

factories and hospitals, the excellent supplier can make it nearly brainless for the customer to find the products or services they need. A study of Home Depot or Target will reveal ever improving thinking about how to label the isles so customers can easily find what they need without help.

Customers don't want barriers to contacting individuals or customer service for the information or service they need.

Email, Skype Phone, website URL, office and Cell phone numbers which are also set up for receiving texting, interact with I-touch or smart phone apps and more and are today's connection essentials for the excellent organization. Customer response times have been dramatically accelerated, where mobile devices are set up as fully functional platforms and business communication can happen from almost anywhere, at any time. When customers want you, excellent suppliers are ready to connect.

This level of connection can extend to ordering and buying, and much more beyond just leaving a message. It is amazing and arrogant to think of how badly customers are sometimes treated when one considers how hard it is to acquire new customers for any business. Even if you are a giant multi-national corporation, it just doesn't make sense to have policies and procedures that could lose even a small percentage of customers. When you have a satisfied customer already, it's always good

idea to hang on to them – and stay connected if you are an excellent supplier.

Customers don't want barriers to accessing information.

Current trends in banking, telephone service, and other industries enable customers secure access to their information, accounts and files. Soon complete medical history records will be shared internationally including high resolution images and document scans that could previously only be referenced by the original paper version. Downloadable product specifications and diagrams, articles and white papers, directories of company representatives, product available inventories and more are examples of information made available for the customer's convenience.

Availability of rich information is often the key to a faster customer buying decision. Some say that the nature of selling is changing because customers have access to so much research before they every talk to a sales rep. Excellent suppliers embrace the opportunity to make more information availableto customers.

Connect with all cultures.

Excellent suppliers recognize the importance of including all groups and persons. Openness to connection is demonstrated by public statements to

various groups, language translations, and accommodating various cultural preferences so they feel welcome and included. In today's diverse society, each niche represents a potential constituency that might mean more business. Inclusion as a business practice and strategy eliminates barriers to connection and increases the potential customer base. No supplier wants to be known as an unfriendly provider to various groups or classes of customers.

Customers want you to be available, personally.

Answering your phone, or at least having a personal respectful message and getting back to customers quickly after they call is considered a professional best practice. Many are surprised at the number of CEO's today who actually answer their own phones and who recognize the importance of this as excellence in being accessible. Customers are duly impressed when you actually call them back--personally. In the case of the screened call, rigorous hard edged phone screening by assistants needs to be softened to maintain respect for the caller, even when the caller is forced to leave a message--no matter how busy an executive assistant might be. Hiring practices should screen for this very special type of personality who can have a big impact on customer perceptions.

Excellence means connecting with customers and stakeholders a priority and using a wide variety of up to date methods and technology to be more accessible based upon the customer's convenience.

SELF MANAGEMENT -

The customer wants the supplier to be well mannered, courteous, and attentive.

Excellent front line service behaviors are one of the easiest areas of the customer experience to manage well and unfortunately, are often overlooked. The customer absolutely has no interest in hearing or seeing a bad mood, rude behavior, in being ignored, or talked down to. Suppliers who consistently bring unnecessary negativity or poor manners to interactions with customer will find themselves looking for new customers sooner than later.

Personnel who work solely on the phone must be extra careful to communicate warmth, receptivity, and respect as they are forming an impression, and indeed a relationship with customers – even without meeting them in person. In telephone situations, the voice and tone of the employee may be the most important part of the customer -supplier relationship.

The customer wants the excellent supplier to have an appearance consistent with the highest expectations for the industry.

Dress, cleanliness, haircut, piercings and tattoos, shoes, makeup and more do make a difference and can potentially have an impact on customer impressions. Benchmark appearance standards, although they may be informal, are available in every industry.

Excellent suppliers strive to exceed the normal industry standard. Front line personnel are the supplier's emissaries, or in the case of the individual- how you appear is part of your personal brand image. First impressions of the entire organization start here.

Attitude of Service

An attitude of service doesn't mean that you are subjugating yourself or demeaning yourself in any way. Demonstrating a high level of consideration for your customers, anticipating their needs, and doing your best to fulfill their requirements is a fine art and is to be respected when done well. An attitude of service is always welcome in the customer supplier relationship. Bringing an attitude of superiority, entitlement, or other negative Ego manifestation is not what customers are looking for. If front line personnel cannot play this role in their job they should find another one.

Excellence means demonstrating excellent manners, a great appearance and the highest level of consideration and attitude of service for customers which is consistently positive and mood free.

COMMITMENT TO THE CUSTOMER -

The customer expects the excellent supplier to demonstrate that they have the customer's best interests in mind over the long term.

Commitment is the romance in the customer supplier relationship. The customer wants to feel like they are the most important customer and that they have your full attention. Demonstrating a commitment to the customer means continually soliciting their needs, making sure you understand them in detail and endeavoring to fill them. The excellent supplier is seen as working hard for the customer.

Maintaining a committed relationship with customers over time may mean staying in touch even when there is no business going on, and having other interactions that show consideration for them, their interests and their ongoing needs.

The Customer wants the Supplier to be honest and up front about all terms and conditions.

As any couple in a relationship will tell you, honesty is important. Suppliers who are caught being dishonest with customers have little hope of maintaining a long term relationship. Providing all information up front provides assurances to the customer that there is trust in the relationship and relieves potential customer anxiety before it happens. Excellence means that customers should never be surprised with expected outcomes that are not delivered or terms and conditions that were not discussed previously.

The customer wants the supplier to take responsibility when things go wrong.

In every customer supplier relationship, mistakes can happen. Customers want the supplier to inform them up front or as soon as possible when disappointments occur. Customers will appreciate the opportunity to change and adjust when they have up to date information, and can minimize negative impacts if they get bad news in as timely a fashion as possible.

Excellent Suppliers Plan For Mistake Recovery

It's one thing to say "I take full responsibility" but it's another to have mistake recovery systems planned ahead of time. A recent story illustrates this point:

Our Thanksgiving dinner group all ordered the traditional turkey meal option except for one person who ordered Prime Rib. The prime rib was overcooked, and our group member sent it back. In the mean time, we all finished our full turkey dinners before the Prime Rib finally came back out. Our lonely beef eater finished their meal uncomfortably, all alone while we all sat there and watched her tediously eat every bite, waiting for her to finish. The restaurant manager was working the restaurant floor, greeting patrons while pouring coffee, asking them about their Thanksgiving experience at the restaurant, and finally came over to our table. We communicated our disappointment with the quality of the prime rib and the slow timing of the episode. "We're really sorry about that", he said, but then he said "You know, that was our fault – so all of your desserts are on the house".

Now it could have been that our Thanksgiving experience might have caused us never to go to that restaurant again, but when the manager took responsibility for their mistake and more than made up for it with free desserts for everyone, our whole attitude changed. This mistake recovery system was something the restaurant had prepared for ahead of time, and was probably a standard practice. For a piece of pie the manager saved relationships with six customers who would, it turned out, return to frequent his restaurant many more times in the future instead of never returning again. The value of the 'life of the customer' was

potentially thousands of dollars for each customer in our group. This response was already planned ahead of time by an excellent supplier who anticipated that there might be disappointments on one of the busiest dining holidays of the year.

Excellence means demonstrating a commitment to the customer by soliciting their needs, honest up front dealings, taking responsibility when things go wrong and demonstrating a commitment to the relationship over time.

TEAMWORK -

The customer wants consistent quality interactions with all of the supplier's departments and personnel and expects these departments and personnel to work well together to meet the customer's needs.

It is easy for those who are not on the front line with customers to disassociate themselves from the responsibility of a high level of service to the customer. It is not only important to emphasize a customer satisfaction oriented culture in the workplace, but it is important for each employee to understand how what they do directly relates to the customer's experience.

When the janitor mopping the floor at the hospital was asked- "What do you do here?" he replied- "I am maintaining the highest standard of environmental cleanliness so World Class medicine can be practiced here. None of this can happen without me". Each employee needs to see how what they do is connected to the organizational mission of serving the customer.

Managing interdepartmental handoffs should be executed seamlessly, with personal introductions by the first employee to introduce the next representative to the customer when this is necessary - often with the original employee available for some time to support the new relationship if necessary. The customer wants to have the same great experience regardless of who they interact with in the organization, and wants to count on their needs being understood by everyone in the supplier's organization.

Customer Satisfaction is The Team's Responsibility

Excellent Teamwork also means sharing negative feedback from customers, even when it means bad news for another department or employee. If you know what's wrong you have a better chance of fixing it together. Teamwork means that a mistake in customer satisfaction is everyone's problem and everyone should be aware when it happens. This also helps support a culture of self reinforcement where mistakes with customers aren't often repeated.

Teamwork Culture Produces Better Results

Excellent organizations put high importance on teamwork and support team building at every level. Breaking down divisions and silos between departments, and creating an atmosphere of trust and respect all contribute towards higher levels of communication and information sharing, collaboration and cooperation - especially when it comes to working together to meet customer needs. Employee pride and ownership will improve when they are more involved and can see a direct relationship between what they do and the positive effects on customers.

Excellent Teamwork Is an Individual Responsibility

In the excellent organization, individual employees need to take inventory of their own teamwork behavior and honestly evaluate themselves and their own ability to work well with others - and to improve where they can. Each individual has the potential to bring synergy to the work group by adjusting and modifying their behavior to what will be most effective and productive to the collective effort and harmony with one another.

The Entire Supply Chain Is Part of the Customer Satisfaction Team

Vendors and suppliers should be made to understand and feel valued that they have been selected as a vital part of delivering satisfaction to the organization's customers. Developing these relationships with all parts of the supply chain has many benefits especially when the

supplier needs special concessions, emergency shipping, or a sample in a different color to demonstrate excellent customer service.

Excellence means being great team players and promoting a teamwork culture with everyone for the benefit of the customer.

INNOVATION -

The customer wants the supplier to utilize up to date technology, processes and equipment consistent with the best available.

Excellence means meeting customer expectations by providing the latest, and the best practice for the industry, product or service. Excellent suppliers continually look for new approaches, new software, machines, processes, and knowledge to stay on the leading edge.

Benchmarking outside of your industry is a good way to find new ways of doing things that others in your own industry haven't thought of yet.

Suppliers need to be keeping it fresh by continuously introducing new products and innovations to keep the attention of the Customer. The customer should not be the one advocating that the supplier refresh their offerings or methodology, but instead should be pleasantly surprised by the supplier's new offerings which have anticipated their needs. .

Excellent suppliers promote a culture of innovation in their own organization and are continuously open to new ideas generated from all quarters.

Suppliers who embrace innovation frequently involve their customers and their employees in generating new product or service ideas. Suggestion systems and open solicitation of ideas taps the brain power of many, rather than just a few at the top.

Competition is Healthy

Competition can be the healthy stimulus that pushes the supplier to try new things, often leading to improvement. Excellent companies are more proactive about looking ahead and are not afraid to look to their competitors - even when they have a seemingly secure market position.

Excellence means advocating for innovation, and tirelessly look for new solutions to old problems, and being the first to experiment with new methods. Excellence means fostering idea sharing and creativity and embracing new contributions from any quarter including looking at the competition.

These 'Ten Values of Excellence' are the age old fundamentals of what customers want- captured here based upon mountains of customer satisfaction research. The relationships between these values as an integrated set correlate with what customers say represents excellence and the positive return and recommend behaviors customers exhibit when these values are well implemented – as well as the negative customer behavior

and consequences for the supplier when they are not well implemented.

In short, the Ten Values of Excellence are the formula for excellence in the customer-supplier relationship, as defined by those most important to your enterprise - your customers!

The next chapter presents these ten values in our forty question Organizational Audit of Excellence. This powerful instrument will allow you to make an honest assessment of your own level of excellence as a supplier and give you the baseline measurement you need to confirm your strengths and to target specific areas in need of improvement in your unique situation.

This is the start of your adventure to achieving a higher level of excellence than you have previously attained.

Chapter 3. The Organizational Audit of Excellence®

You are the supplier.

Assuming that you want to make improvements in your relationships with your customers, and want to enjoy a higher level of excellence and success, the framework of a scientific process for improvement is presented here. The first step is to measure accurately, where you are today according to the Ten Values of Excellence.

This forms the baseline measurements from which improvements are targeted and reveals the opportunities that when focused on, will yield the best results in increased customer loyalty, preference and return & recommend rate. Ideally, you will embark on an improvement process that will drive you scores higher, and you will be able to re-measure later and see real

improvement and having others increasingly refer to you as excellent.

If you have been looking for a recipe for organizational change and improvement, that builds excellence and success for your organization, this is it.

Whether one is the chief executive or just a front line salary man, this internal self-audit will provide immense insights into how well the organization is satisfying its customers. It is equally effective for measuring divisions or departments within the same company.

For purposes of this audit, clarify in your mind, who is the supplier you are evaluating and who the customer(s) are, what product or service line those customers are experiencing and then fill out the audit. You might for example fill out this audit for a hotel and its restaurant separately. This audit will work with several different kinds of groups, from internal departments and even individual workers, to entire multi-national corporations or government agencies.

When measuring the customer's experience, you will need to 'put yourself in the shoes of the customer' when taking the audit, as it represents only a single respondent view. This is not a test or evaluation of individual employees and their departments or work with the purposes of finding fault or being critical. It is a team effort and exercise in realism, data and facts rather than blame.

For a more meaningful and significant result, several people or even groups of personnel can perform this audit independently and then combine and average the responses from a collective perspective – effectively capturing the ‘group think’ attitudes relating to excellence. See the back of this book for links to perform this audit online as an individual or a group.

The same criteria are applied to competitors, covered later, to get a very specific item by item comparison and to form the basis for a more strategic approach.

By calculating the scores for each value and the overall mean scores at the end of the audit you will obtain an accurate measurement of your overall relationship with customers, and your strengths and weaknesses in each of the values of excellence, as well as how your overall score predicts the behavior of your customer today.

Directions-

Stand back and take an objective look at the organization, department, division or person you want to audit as 'the supplier' (this is the term utilized throughout the audit). Think about your own knowledge and experience, and imagine yourself as the customer - based upon customer experiences you know, have heard about or have insight into. As you ‘put yourself in the shoes of the customer’ be honest, be objective, and answer each of the questions. There are 40 questions with 4 questions for each Value of Excellence.

Special Note:

Since you are reading this book on a digital platform as an E-book you won't be able to interact with this audit by selecting responses etc. like you would with one of our digital surveys, or filling out a paper version with a pencil. You will need to print a paper version of the Audit so you can do just that. Alternatively, for a fee you can take the Organizational Excellence Audit online and have a complete report emailed to you including findings, charts and recommendations – (this can also be set up for group assessments of any size). This might be helpful for presentation with various work groups and organizations, or simply for your own convenience.

If you are reading this on an airplane or by the pool, nothing is stopping you from pulling out a piece of scratch paper and a pen and doing the best to calculate your results here anyway...

Name of the subject of this audit:

Name of the product or service line referred to here:
(XYZ Restaurant, Engineering Department, Cable
Service Installers etc.):

Circle the number from 1 (least extent) to 10 (highest extent) for each question. Calculate your mean scores for each of the Values of Excellence and then calculate your overall mean score and follow the directions to plot your scores on the Excellence Impact Chart that follows.

Quality

1) The Supplier's products or services are among the best available.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) The Supplier provides products or services error free.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) The Supplier consistently gets it right the first time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4) The Supplier's personnel have necessary systems and product line knowledge.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Value

5) The Supplier's products or services are an excellent value for the cost.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6)The Supplier offers value added incentives customers want.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) The Supplier's products or services remain a good value over the long term.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8) The Supplier's prices haven't risen disproportionately over time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Timeliness

9) The Supplier delivers early or on time.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10) The Supplier optimizes product and service delivery to require the minimum of time for the customer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11) The Supplier is among the most timely available.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12) The Supplier will take all the time required when necessary to achieve customer satisfaction.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Efficiency

13) The Supplier has optimized processes and systems for the convenience of the customer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14) The Supplier's processes and systems have a logical and sequential flow.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15) Interaction with the Supplier is through a single point of contact.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16) The Supplier is among the most efficient available.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Environment

17) The Supplier's plant/facilities/office environment is clean and well organized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18) The Supplier's plant/facilities/office environment is aesthetically pleasing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19) The Supplier's environment feels warm and welcoming.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20) The Supplier's environment feels physically and psychologically safe.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Connection

21) It is easy to locate and access the Supplier's products/services, information and personnel.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22) The Supplier's products/services are available when the customer needs them.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23) The Supplier utilizes convenient up to date technology to communicate.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24) The Supplier is personally available to communicate with customers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Self Management

25) The Supplier maintains the professional appearance expected.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26) The Supplier is consistently courteous and attentive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

27) The Supplier is consistently friendly and enthusiastic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

28) The Supplier consistently demonstrates an attitude of service.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Commitment

29) The Supplier works hard to demonstrate that they have the customer's long term interests in mind.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

30) The Supplier is honest with its customers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

31) The Supplier provides all information and transaction details up front to the customer.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

32) The Supplier takes immediate responsibility and corrective action when outcomes are not achieved.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Teamwork

33) The Customer experiences excellent teamwork between all Supplier's personnel.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34) The Supplier promotes an internal culture of teamwork.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

35) The Supplier's employees and staff enjoy working together..

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

36) The Supplier's team produces excellent work together.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Innovation

37) The Supplier is known for utilizing industry best practices.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

38) The Supplier continues to offer a product/service that is up to date.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

39) The Supplier promotes a culture of innovation within the organization.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

40) The Supplier involves customers in generating new ideas for improvement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

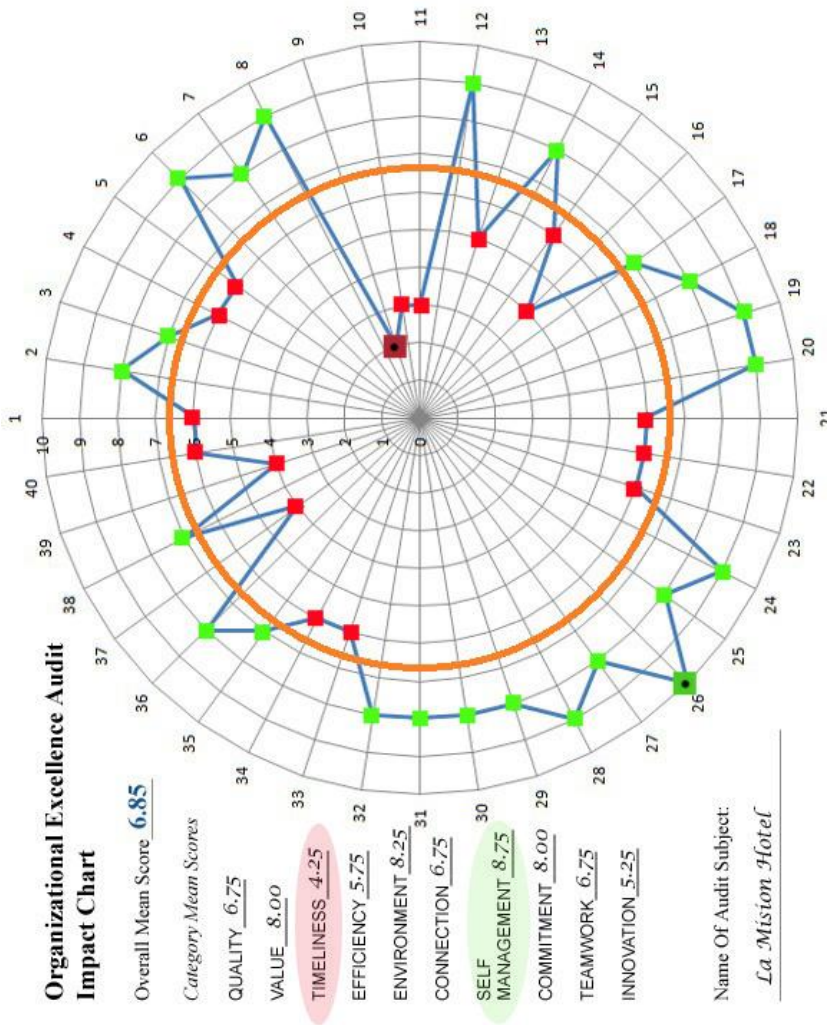
Add the total of scores and divide by 4 to get the category mean score_____

Add the total of all mean scores and divide by 10 to get your OVERALL MEAN SCORE_____

PLOT YOUR RESULTS ON THE IMPACT CHART

- Plot your results on the Organizational Excellence Audit Impact Chart (Use Blank Impact Chart Provided)
- Draw in a circle on the chart corresponding to your overall mean score. (orange)
- Plot each question score (1 through 10) as a point on the chart. (red for lower than the mean, green for higher than the mean)
- Make a special red mark for the lowest individual question score
- Make a special green mark for the highest individual question score
- Fill in the mean score calculations for each category and circle the best and worst.

(See example)



In our Impact Chart example it is easy to get an overall impression from the Audit of Excellence results.

The overall mean score is represented as a combination or average of all excellence factors, in this case- a mediocre score of **6.85**.

It is easy to see that timeliness is the weakest area overall for the hotel in our example, and that all of the Self Management factors were above the mean- making this the highest rated category at 8.75.

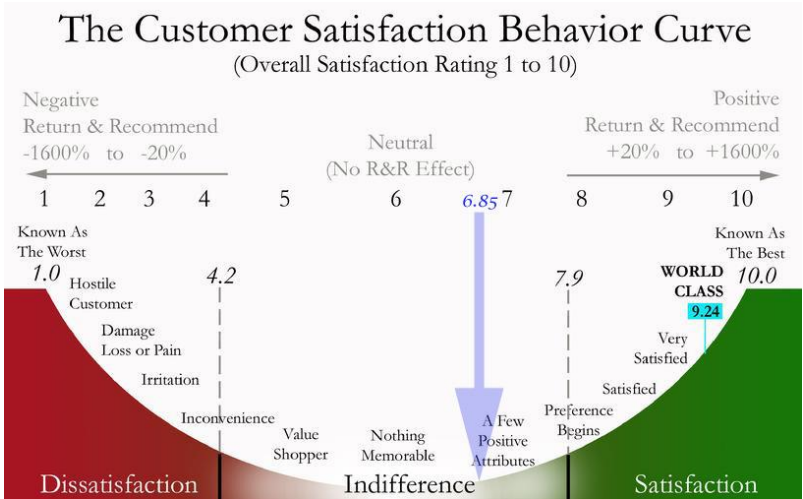
The lowest rated individual question is Question #9 “The Supplier delivers early or on time” which scored a 2 , confirming that timeliness is a major issue for this organization.

Question 26 “The Supplier is consistently courteous and attentive” scored a 10, suggesting that this is the front line personnel’s biggest strength.

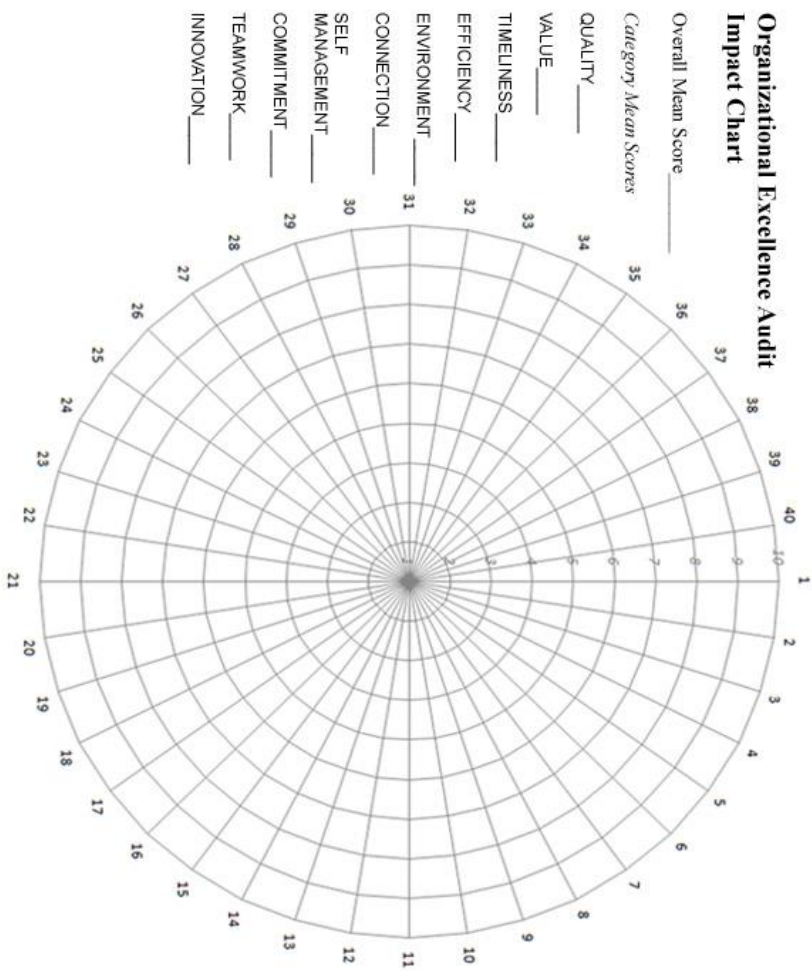
Each category can be observed as ‘above the mean’ or ‘below the mean’ with individual questions in each category analyzed for their positive or negative impact on the category and the overall mean score.

In our example we can see that the overall mean score reflect Customer Indifference with no return and recommend rate. Although there are some positive attributes, the overall level of excellence is not enough to stimulate positive return and recommend rate. The business in this example can see where they have a lot to work on.

Use the blank Impact chart included on the next page to plot your results.



Organizational Excellence Audit Impact Chart



Chapter 4. Scoring Your Audit and Interpreting Your Results

As on overall picture, let's take a deeper look at the implications of your overall mean score results from the Excellence Audit.

1.00-3.00

Alert! Audit scores in this range should signal an emergency for the supplier. These lows signals indicate a fundamental need to examine the entire product/service delivery system. No supplier can hope to maintain a relationship with customers unless they are the sole provider of an in-demand product or service. Failure of the supplier is imminent.

Although in most cases, studying areas where the supplier scored lowest might be helpful for improvement, scores for all of the values are so low that the ongoing

existence of any potential relationship with the supplier is in question.

Customers are experiencing more than inconvenience, in fact they are in a painful, losing scenario and may be hostile. Negative return and recommend rates will reflect a rapidly deteriorating reputation as a supplier, and possible widespread motivation by customers to take punitive action against them. The supplier with scores this low falls into the unenviable description of 'being known as the WORST'. 1000% + Negative Return and Recommend Rate.

3.00 - 4.00

You should smell plenty of smoke. Although customer satisfaction is also very low here, customers are not quite as hostile as in the previous example. Customers express dissatisfaction by not returning because of a loss of confidence and irritation. This supplier will be experiencing a loss of market share. Closer examination of the audit will reveal several weak areas that need to be repaired to at least move scores out of the zone of dissatisfaction and into the zone of indifference. These are low scores that are affecting the supplier negatively. Customers will not return or recommend this supplier to others. It will take a serious campaign to turn these numbers around. This supplier could be referred to as BAD. 20% to 100% of customers are referring negatively to this supplier.

4.10 - 6.00

Not working to potential. These scores are often seen in older suppliers who have not re-tooled to stay current with best practices in their industry. Little innovation, coupled with no recent improvement in product or service creates a stale and vulnerable supplier that does little to make themselves memorable to customers. **MEDIOCRE** is the most accurate description for a supplier with scores in this range. It is not unusual for morale in the supplier's organization to be low as well with feelings of futility for overcoming organizational inertia, or a resignation by personnel that "things don't change around here".

By no means does this supplier have a secure hold on market share, the reality is that crisis may be just around the corner. This supplier needs to get to work on improvement before they slip back to the bad category. 0% Positive Return & Recommend Rate.

6.10 - 7.80

CONFIDENT COMPLACENCY. Suppliers who score in this range on the ExcellenceAudit have not completely embraced customer satisfaction but are not in any immediate danger of failing because of negative customer feelings. The challenge is that unless there is a crisis on the horizon, or a big opportunity, it is hard to get motivated for additional effort to increase excellence.

Additionally, suppliers with an overall score of 6.0 or higher might have the mis-perception that they are in positive territory. This false sense of confidence means little more than that the supplier seems to be holding their ground.

There are several values scoring well and customers may be patronizing this supplier because of convenient location, special sale prices, or other particular benefit. To enjoy higher levels of satisfaction with accompanying positive word of mouth and return business however, the supplier needs to push their excellence scores higher.

It should be noted that improving satisfaction scores to more excellent levels is not easy, or everyone would be doing it. A concerted effort will require more focused energy to get results. There may be low hanging fruit where things can be easily improved in this case, which this audit may reveal. When scores are this high, there may be one or two things that can be done to push the supplier solidly into the zone of positive return and recommend rate, preference and loyalty. While there are some customers supporting this business they are not necessarily loyal or recommending this business to others.

7.90 - 9.00

This supplier is DOING WELL. Be confident that customers are being satisfied and that this supplier must

be performing well in most areas and very well in some others. This supplier can expect anywhere from one in five customers (on the low end) to return to buy again to as many as four out of five to more than 100% who will be referring positively to this supplier. Customers will be sharing positive unsolicited testimonials with other customers at a good rate - who are patronizing this supplier based on that recommendation. This situation is ideal for the supplier. When the supplier has gotten this far in creating positive customer impressions it is not unfamiliar with good management practices and the hard work it takes to focus on excellence. Now the supplier can make the decision to push satisfaction even higher - to extend the lead over competitors, sneak up on industry benchmarks and to become one of the best with a higher level of excellence in their particular market.

9.10 -10.00

Wow! This supplier is **KNOWN AS THE BEST**. This is where excellence lives. This supplier is doing it right and has consistently made customer satisfaction an imperative throughout all dimensions of product/service delivery. The name of this supplier is likely to be widely renowned as the industry leader, can command premium pricing or other advantages, and enjoys high levels of free word of mouth advertising. Competitors are probably far behind, or not even in the same league.

Suppliers in the 9.00 to 10.00 range can be leveraging the strength of their position to drive further research and development into evolving their product or service line to continue to dominate the leading edge.

‘World Class’, according to universal measurement of customers is 9.24 or higher. Suppliers who achieve this rating can confidently use the term 'World Class' or the term ‘Excellent’ in their marketing and may find that it is often others who use this term when referring to them as their name will be synonymous with very high quality, excellence and the highest levels of satisfaction.

There are very few organizations that enjoy the rarified air of overall excellence ratings as high as 9.5 or more. It requires incredible energy and systemic and comprehensive commitment to achieve and maintain satisfaction levels this high-- but it is definitely worth it to be the best. Look for return and recommend rates as high as 1600%.

More Analysis-Category Results: Surviving, Maintaining and Evolving

The mean scores for each of the Values of Excellence is its own snapshot of customer satisfaction health. Some represent the lower scores that are pulling the overall mean score down, while others are bringing it up- these are the supplier's weaknesses and strengths.

There are three basic objectives in making improvements to drive for a higher level of excellence-

Bringing lowest scores up to 4.1 or higher.

These lowest scores are causing negative customer reactions and having an adverse effect – whether in an individual question area or in the entire excellence category. To survive, scores for each Excellence Value should be brought up to at least a 4.1 so the supplier can avoid the negative impacts associated with the zone of dissatisfaction.

Bring low scores up to the overall mean to maintain.

The overall mean score is a healthy and hopefully reasonable metric/target for first improvement efforts, when trying to improve lower category scores. When audit scores from each value are tightly grouped around the overall mean this signals that attention has been paid to customer satisfaction at some level for each value of excellence. Metrics in this range are reasonable performance targets when assigned to departments or personnel and monitored over time. Instead of trying to make everything a ‘10’ improvement efforts can be focused on achieving a ‘reasonable level of performance’ now and then improved more later. Meeting today’s overall mean score for each area is a reasonable and more achievable standard of performance to shoot for.

The range between the overall mean score and 10.0 represents the opportunity to evolve and improve.

Scores which are already high, can be improved for an even bigger effect. Scores that are 'average' can be improved for a more positive impact. Any score raised above the overall mean score represents an evolution and improvement.

Highest Individual Factors/Lowest Individual Factors

Although it seems obvious, the lowest scoring questions should be attacked first as the most important areas for the supplier to address. These are especially sensitive areas that will yield a big effect if they can be remedied. Conversely, highest scoring questions, since they are already strong areas, might be some of the easiest ways to increase satisfaction scores overall, by making these areas where the supplier is already doing well even stronger.

Further Analysis: Human Factors , Process Factors & Structural Factors

While each of the Values of Excellence and each individual question on this audit are important, improving everything at once might seem daunting – or just not possible in some cases. An analysis of Human, Process and Structural Factors lets the supplier know whether we are talking about improving our people, the way we do things or needing to change some major structural part of our enterprise to raise our level of excellence. Not all needed improvements necessarily cost more money but this next level of excellence analysis will aid our decision making. Some of these

excellence factors reside simultaneously in more than one of these categories.

HUMAN EXCELLENCE FACTORS. Human factors are those excellence factors related to human behavior that have the possibility of impacting the customer and for the most part are more easily altered or changed with training, or through individual changes in behavior. These are the easiest excellence factors to improve and represent a fast opportunity to achieve higher excellence scores. Evaluate each of these questions and list your current score from the audit. Add up and average the scores at the end of this list for an overall average of Human Excellence Factors.

Q4. The Supplier's personnel have detailed product/service line knowledge Current Score_____

Q2. The Supplier provides products/services error free. Current Score_____

Q9. The Supplier delivers early or on time. Current Score_____

Q19. The Supplier's environment feels warm and welcoming. Current Score_____

Q20. The Supplier's environment feels physically and psychologically safe. Current Score_____

Q25. The Supplier maintains the professional appearance expected. Current Score_____

Q26. The Supplier is consistently courteous and attentive. Current Score_____

Q27. The Supplier is consistently friendly and enthusiastic. Current Score_____

Q28. The Supplier consistently demonstrates an attitude of service. Current Score_____

Q30. The Supplier is honest with its customers. Current Score_____

Q32. The Supplier takes immediate responsibility and corrective action when outcomes are not achieved. Current Score_____

Q33. The Supplier has excellent teamwork between its workers and departments. Current Score_____

Q35. The Supplier's customers experience smooth handoffs between the supplier's departments, divisions and co-workers. Current Score_____

Q36. The Supplier's team perform one another's jobs when necessary to serve the customers well. Current Score_____

If we add up and average the Human Factors from our Hotel example it looks like this:

Hotel Example - Total 106 Divided by 14 Human Excellence Factors = **7.57** While still not achieving a score high enough to create positive return and

recommend – the ‘Human Factors’ for our hotel example did score higher than the overall excellence scores for the organization as a whole.

You can perform your own Human Excellence Factor Analysis here as well.

PROCESS EXCELLENCE FACTORS. Process excellence means the way of doing things at an organization. Think of a flow chart of steps in sequence, established policies for doing things a certain way or procedures that are repeated the same way each time. While some processes are specifically engineered and designed, others have evolved in an ad hoc fashion and have little logic behind their origins other than ‘that’s the way we have always done it around here’. Evaluating the process factors of the Excellence Audit together as a set can reveal whether or not process shortfalls are present as a pattern throughout the enterprise.

Q2. The Supplier provides products/services error free.
Current Score_____

Q3. The Supplier gets it right the first time. Current Score_____

Q8. The Supplier's prices haven't risen disproportionately over time. Current Score_____

Q9. The Supplier delivers early or on time. Current Score_____

Q10. The Supplier optimizes product and service delivery to require the minimum of time for the customer.

Current Score_____

Q11. The Supplier is among the most timely available.

Current Score_____

Q12. The Supplier will take all the time required when necessary to achieve customer satisfaction.

Current Score_____

Q13. The Supplier has optimized processes and systems for the convenience of the customer.

Current Score_____

Q14. The Supplier's processes and systems have a logical and sequential flow.

Q15. Interaction with the Supplier is mainly through a single point of contact.

Current Score_____

Q16. The Supplier is among the most efficient available.

Current Score_____

Q31 The Supplier provides all information and transaction details up front.

Current Score_____

Q32 The Supplier takes immediate responsibility and corrective action when outcomes are not achieved.

Current Score_____

Q36. The Supplier's team perform one another's jobs when necessary to serve the customer well.

Current Score_____

Q37. The Supplier is known for utilizing industry best practices. Current Score_____

Q39. The Supplier promotes a culture of innovation within the organization. Current Score_____

Q40. The Supplier involves customers in generating new ideas for improvement. Current Score_____

Once again, using our Hotel example to score Process Excellence Factors, here are the results:

Total 125 divided by 17 Process Excellence Factors:
6.35

The Process Excellence Factors score in our example is lower than the overall mean score for all excellence factors. As a set, process factors demand more attention for improvement with our sample hotel example than human factors.

STRUCTURAL EXCELLENCE. Structural excellence factors include infrastructure, investments in systems and technology, materials and more that facilitate a higher level of customer satisfaction and excellent product and service delivery

Q1. The Supplier's products/services are among the best available. Current Score_____

Q5. The Supplier's products/services are an excellent value for the cost. Current Score_____

Q6. The Supplier offers value added incentives customers want. Current Score_____

Q7. The Supplier's products/services remain a good value for the long term. Current Score_____

Q17. The Supplier's plant/facilities/office environment is clean and well organized. Current Score_____

Q18. The Supplier's plant/facilities/office environment is aesthetically pleasing. Current Score_____

Q21. It is easy to locate and access the Supplier's products/services & info. Current Score_____

Q22. The Supplier's products/services are available when the customer needs them. Current Score_____

Q34. The Supplier promotes an internal culture of teamwork. Current Score_____

Q37. The Supplier is known for utilizing industry best practices. Current Score_____

Q38. The Supplier continues to offer a product/service that represents the latest and best. Current Score_____

Q39. The Supplier promotes a culture of innovation within the organization. Current Score_____

Q40. The Supplier involves customers in generating new ideas for improvement. Current Score_____

Structural Excellence Factors when combined here in our Hotel example result in:

Total 83 divided by 14 Structural Factors = **6.38**

So in summary of our three categories of Excellence Factors for our example:

Human Excellent Factors **7.57**

Process Excellence Factors **6.25**

Structural Excellence Factors **6.38**

Overall Excellence Audit Score: 6.75

If this Hotel was looking at areas most in need of improvement, this level of analysis suggests that Process and Structural factors are more in need of improvement than the human factors. While all three categories can benefit from improvement – a case could be made for attacking process excellence factors as the first priority.

Another Dimension Of Analysis To Consider.

Every product or service is unique and each product or service offered by suppliers is understood by its customers to have one or two of the values of excellence

that are more important or a higher priority to the customer than the others.

The quality of meat in a steak restaurant is more important to the customer than the out of the way location of the restaurant (Connection). The mechanical reliability of a laptop computer (Quality) is more important to the customer than the front line service behavior of the clerk at the computer store (Self-Management). The price of the good deal (Value) at the swap meet is more important to the customer than the funky outdoor exhibit of the vendor (Environment).

So how do these disparities figure into the Ten Values of Excellence? While all of the Ten Values of Excellence can have an effect on a customer's overall experience, and how they score the supplier - some factors are more heavily weighted than others - according to customer preferences.

What this really means is that the supplier not only has to score well in all areas but there are a few core values of excellence where they had really be performing at a high level. So how do you figure out which of the Ten Values of Excellence have the highest priority with your customers?

Presented here is a simple exercise to give relative weightings to each of the Ten Values of Excellence with a particular product or service in the mind of its customers.

Here's how it works: **Values Of Excellence**

Prioritization Matrix¹

1.(This methodology is borrowed from 'quality function deployment' derived from the manufacturing industry.)

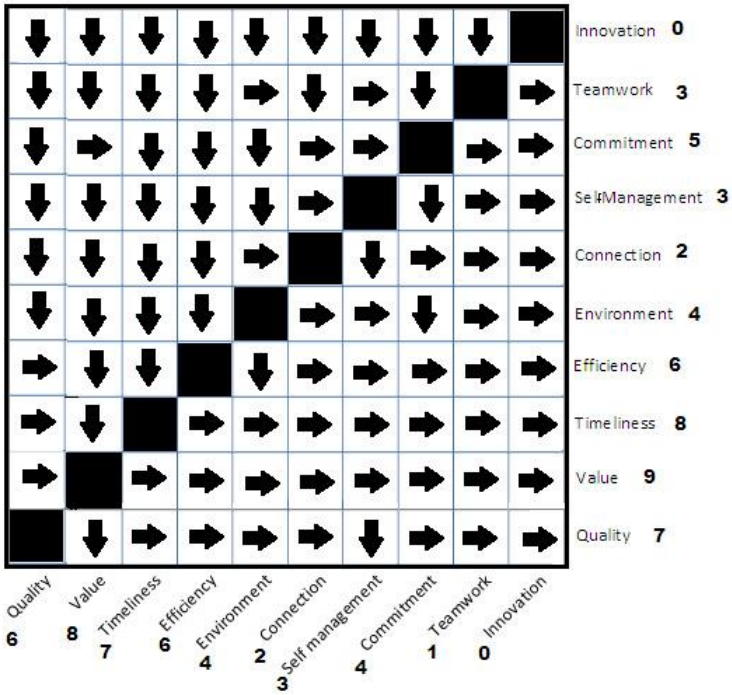
What is presented is a series of paired choices between each of the Ten Values of Excellence.

Think of the specific product or service you are auditing and once again, put yourself into the shoes of the customer as you evaluate which of the pair of choices would be more important to the customer.

As you consider each pair of choices place an arrow towards the one which you think the customer would find more preferable.

After completing the entire matrix add up the number of arrows pointing to each factor (from both axis) to determine their prioritization.

See the example below - using our hotel example again.

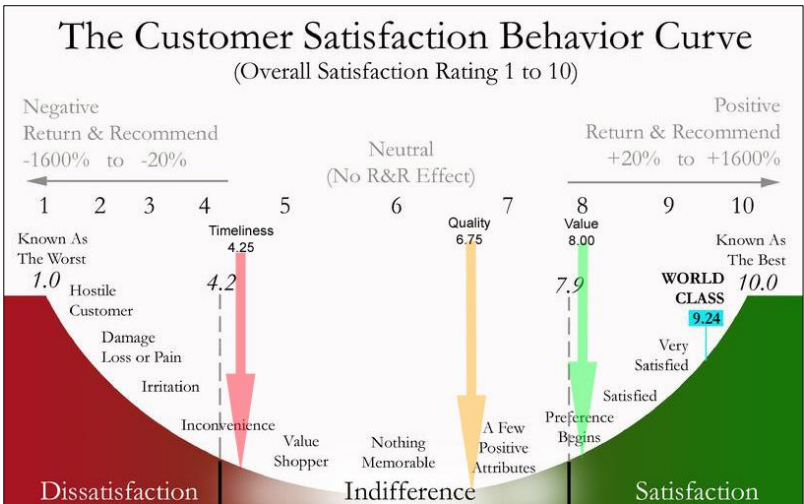


The totals from this exercise reflect the following prioritization of the Ten Values of Excellence:

- Value 17
- Timeliness 15
- Quality 13
- Efficiency 12
- Commitment 11
- Environment 8
- Self Management 6
- Teamwork 4
- Commitment 4
- Innovation 0

These prioritizations would seem to suggest that customers for this hotel are looking for a good price, need fast service, and want a quality product. These priorities are important to understand as the hotel prioritizes investment of energy and resources in one area of excellence vs another. These customer priorities should be given special attention as the results of the Excellence Audit are reviewed.

In our Hotel example- this is how these areas scored on the Customer Satisfaction Behavior Curve:



As we can see here Value - the highest priority for our customer has scored an 8.00 from our audit and is just high enough to fall within the zone of Customer Satisfaction. Timeliness, the second highest priority

according to our prioritization matrix has scored unfortunately low and is nearly creossing over into the zone of Customer Dissatisfaction. Quality, the third highest priority for this type of customer received only a 6.75 in our Excellence Audit.

What this means:

While all areas of the Audit of Excellence can influence the total customer experience, the things that customers are looking for as their highest priorities should be given the most attention from the supplier if they want to be competititve and stay in business. In our example above, and as the overall audit score suggests, this supplier scores in the zone of customer indifference with an overall score of 6.75.

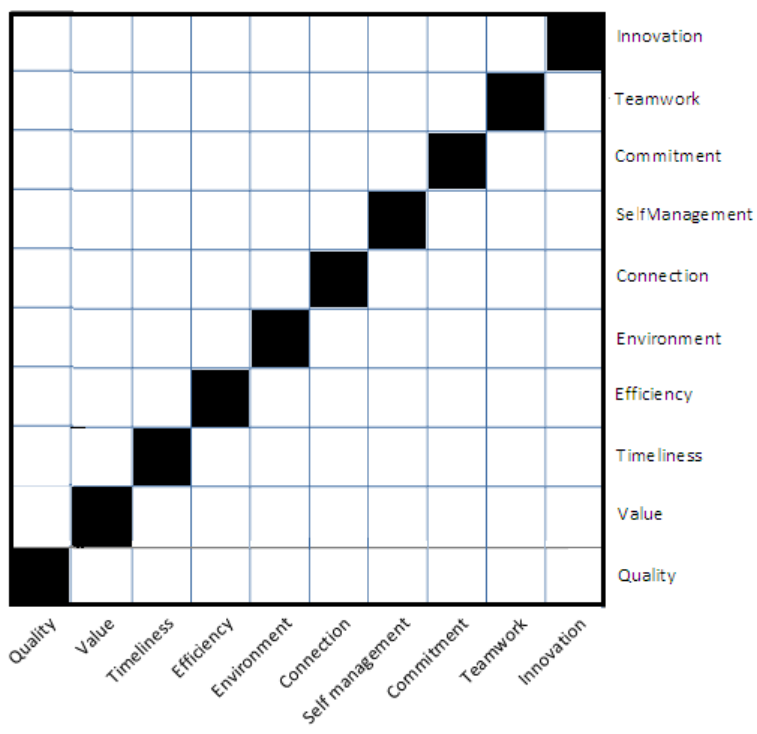
Interestingly, the hotel supplier in our example's highest score is 8.25 in Environment. This particular Hotel puts a lot of investment into the rooms and décor in the hotel. While this is nice for any hotel, it is not necessarily the highest priority for this Hotel's customers. Self Management was rated as the highest category in the Excellence Audit at 8.75, while timeliness was rated as the lowest - at 4.25.

Perhaps this suggests that while the front line personnel are courteous and service oriented, they are making customers wait too long.

Paying attention to the core priorities of your customer means that you as the excellence focused supplier endeavor to give customers what they want.

As we look towards developing an improvement strategy with these powerful audit tools, focusing on the customer's top priorities should be given appropriate attention to keep audit results in perspective.

Use the chart below to calculate the weightings for each value of excellence for your own customers.



Chapter 5. Improvement Planning and

Re-Measurement

Strategic planning means you will integrate the findings and new perspectives you have gained from analyzing the Values of Excellence in your work or organization.

The target is a continuously improving customer-supplier relationship where your overall scores on the audit are moving solidly into positive return and recommend rate territory earning you all of the accompanying benefits of increased sales, more positive reputation, and unsolicited referrals.



Alignment with Core Mission

Once you have completed the Values Prioritization Matrix, look at your own organization's mission statement to see how it matches with the priorities your customers want most. This exercise represents a deep fundamental look at your organization and its product and service line. You may find that a fresh look at your organization's mission statement is warranted.

Many organizations morph over time and get out of touch with their original purpose. Some areas of activity may need to be eliminated completely to do a better job in more critical areas important to the customer. Alignment with customer priorities is critical to delivering them at higher levels of excellence.

If you are an individual employee, you can craft a personal statement of purpose and re-examine the expectations of supervisors and team members within and outside of your particular department. Shifting your work and service around delivery of critical customer priorities might see you re-organizing your time and how you are working now.

Take a hard look at your customer relationships

Are you creating Win-Win relationships with your customers? Is your business model based on single one-time transactions or a relationship over a long period of time? Where are the areas where customers might see a relationship with you as Win-Lose?

Do you exercise a monopoly-like sole supplier leverage over your customers? Would they choose you if they had other choices? Do you have a steady stream of customer complaints? Do you turn a deaf ear to customer suggestions for improvement or other obvious things you know you could or should fix?

Before embarking on an improvement plan to gain additional leverage in your market, get your big picture motivations to a place where you are proactive about creating actual satisfying relationships with your customers. No amount of 'tricks or gimmicks', 'magic bullets' or 'satisfaction science' is going to work for you if your business model continues to be fundamentally Win-Lose. Win-Lose relationships are not sustainable over

time. Win-Lose customer supplier relationships are not excellent.

Embrace Benchmarking

Excellence is about creating a culture where the focus is improving in each of the values every way you can. This means having an accurate assessment of how you stack up against the competition. Some product, service, organization or individual represents the benchmark or best practice in your industry in every area of excellence. Set yourself to thinking harder about improvement and how you can leverage each of the Values Of Excellence to meet or exceed industry benchmarks.

Existing Customer Maintenance

In a challenging business climate hanging on to customers can be a constant battle. Applying the Values Of Excellence as a supplier is one of the smartest things you can do to keep the customers you've got.

After accomplishing the various analyses here you will have a good idea of some things you might not be doing or fresh ways to make a positive impression on the customers you have now. Take the initiative now to let customers know you want a great relationship with them and show your interest and appreciation before it's too late. Most organizations depend upon repeat customers to sustain them.

Improvement Across The Board

Your Strengths. Identify your highest rated Values Of Excellence and determine how you can celebrate and build on your strengths to make them even stronger. Make a list of all the things you can do to go from good to great in the areas you are already strong in.

Think of ways to highlight these strengths with customers who might not have noticed before. Tute your own horn. Emphasize how you do these things better than your competition. Build it into your marketing and sales efforts.

Your Weaknesses.

The areas you have identified as lowest scoring need some attention if you are going to be moving towards World Class levels of customer satisfaction. Make a plan now to address the lowest areas first- especially where they are dipping into the zone of customer dissatisfaction. These low scoring areas are hurting your business, reputation and customer base. Get after these weakness area improvements right away.

Your Opportunities.

Once you have performed a detailed and thorough analysis according to the Values Of Excellence, you should also have a good idea of your competitor's vulnerabilities. If you need to do a complete audit of a

competitor - take the time to do it to get an item by item comparison.

There may be areas where your satisfaction scores are similar and you have the opportunity to distinguish yourself by adding something or just being a little bit better. Areas where you have a significant advantage gap should be widened and exploited aggressively. Areas where you have achieved benchmark levels of satisfaction should be built into your marketing efforts as well to solidify your advantage. Complete the excellence audit on your competitors and compare it with your own – item for item. This will give you another important strategic perspective.

Don't be afraid to use the Excellence Audit on each of your product or service niches to narrowly identify the detailed desires of each separate customer group. Each customer group and sometimes each individual customer will have a different relationship with your organization, product or service.

For example, a restaurant might have completely different types of customers for breakfast and lunch as opposed to the happy hour or dinner time crowds. There may be specific attractive opportunities with small groups of customers that were neglected in the past. Make the effort to understand each customer group in detail and to somehow become a more excellent supplier to each.

Your Threats.

Industry trends, your own history, fierce competitors, and economic decline are all factors that might be pushing on you and your organization. Doing nothing is its own kind of threat. The Ten Values of Excellence are one of the most powerful weapons you can use to fight back against the threats out there by making yourself more competitive, improving customer relationships, and compensating for your weaknesses. Examine your toughest challenges through the lens of the Ten Values of Excellence and go on the offensive. With a detailed study of each threat, no matter how seemingly insurmountable, solutions will emerge if you are willing to take a long term proactive approach and to keep moving forward towards excellence.

Energy and Motivation.

The overall attitude and culture of your business, organization, or department might need to be rejuvenated if there is a history of complacency or mediocrity. Ask yourself if you as a supplier are focused solely on survival, just maintaining the status quo or if you have positive energy directed towards change, growth and improvement.

Becoming an excellent supplier necessitates a serious commitment level and for organizations, the coordination of everyone's energies. If a large scale change is envisioned it will take a symbolic commitment, training,

clear communication and leadership by example to re-orient everyone's priorities.

Make a plan now for how improvements, training, changes in policy, process, or procedure will be implemented in a well orchestrated organization-wide campaign to improve satisfaction and by creating more excellent customer-supplier relationships.

“You can only lead others where you yourself are prepared to go.” -- Lachlan McLean

Now you understand what excellence means. You have the opportunity to influence others as a business owner, manager, supervisor, department specialist, front line employee, CEO, small business owner, homemaker, elected official, government functionary or volunteer in a non-profit organization. Making an excellence impact across organizational cultures and the environments in which you function means addressing:

- 1) Processes and Systems
- 2) People- Communication, Training, Empowerment, Teamwork
- 3) Relationships with Customers
- 4) Addressing Structural Factors Where Possible
- 5) Your Individual Commitment To Demonstrating World Class Leadership.

Processes

As the old saying goes "What gets measured, gets done." A commitment to excellence is the process of creating a baseline measurement and continuously improving the ten factors that will influence customer behaviors that will result in positive outcomes such as increased sales, beating your competition, repeat business, and all of the good things your customers do when they are happy and satisfied. Maintaining a focus on what could be argued as, the most critical set of business success factors, means setting up systems to measure and monitor what is actually happening in your entire customer-supplier relationship supply and value chain.

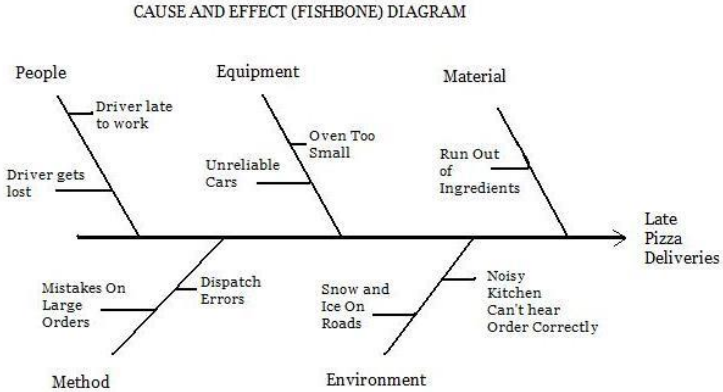
After performing the Excellence Audit, you will naturally want to drill deeper into your processes to see what they look like now, and the root causes that you can attack to improve them. Process mapping might be a good first step.

The simple act of defining the steps in any part of the supply chain in the actual customer transaction could be revealing. By constructing a basic flowchart of the way a process looks today you will be able to see the logic, or lack of logic in the order of steps, extra or redundant steps or re-work, inspection or checking steps that can be eliminated by better process design, how much time individual steps are taking, where process bottlenecks regularly occur, or when interdepartmental handoffs

seem to cause things to slip between the cracks. Your focus can then lead to analysis of the root cause for problems in a particular part of your process.

A cause and effect diagram is a simple yet elegant tool for determining the root cause of variation, gaps, defects or errors in a process. A 'fishbone' diagram is constructed listing five factor categories that might be influencing the problem: People, Material, Equipment, Method, and Environment.

Each of the branches of the cause-effect diagram is dedicated to analyzing the potential factors in each category that might be the cause of the problem.



Are the **people** involved making some kind of mistake or error? Are they trained adequately, are they prioritizing the specific outcomes you are looking for? Are they

giving the process appropriate attention? Is their personality or negative behavior impacting the process?

Is the **material** you are utilizing the quality it needs to be or is it somehow defective? Is it a 'garbage in' scenario where the rest of the process is designed around compensating for poor initial quality or defects in material? Are you monitoring the quality of material inputs, managing supplier and vendor quality etc.?

Equipment utilized by the process might need to be updated, recalibrated, thrown away completely or serviced. Repetition of problems from defective or inefficient equipment, or tool wear can be a continual stressor that might be easier to fix once and for all with new equipment.

Method is really the intricate order of steps in the process, specific approach, and your 'way of doing things'. Benchmarking others' processes can be a critical and objective way of helping you to examine where there are improvements to be made in 'how we do things around here'. If you haven't questioned your processes from a zero based outlook (completely fresh look, totally objective, fundamental questioning) in a while - or ever-- then it is probably time. Achieving excellence means continuously looking for ways to improve in all areas.

Environment can also be a contributing factor that impedes a process. Cleanliness, interruptions, disorganization, local politics, stressful conditions, too

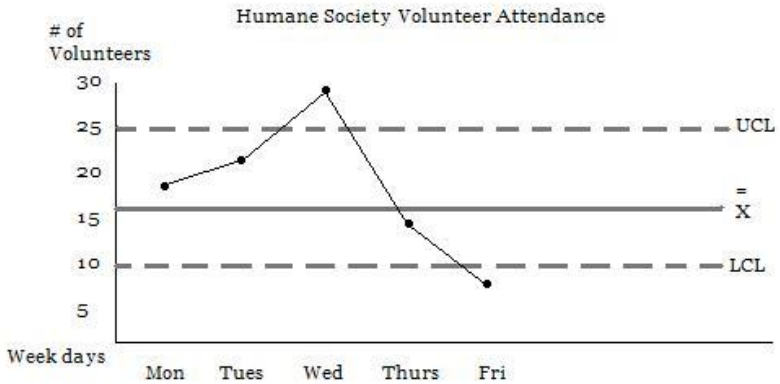
crowded, temperature, humidity, too much noise, bad lighting and more can influence processes in subtle and unexpected ways to affect outcomes and results.

Control Charts

Another way to recognize sources of variation in a process over time is the control chart.

It is often important to focus attention on detecting and monitoring process variation over time and can be used as a guide for local or management action or as a tool for on site, ongoing control of a process. Control charts help processes to perform consistently and predictably for higher quality, lower cost and higher effective capacity while creating a common understanding and language for discussion process performance.

Control charts can be used for variable data (plotted on a continuous scale such as time, temperature, cost etc.) or attribute data (shipping errors, waste, absenteeism etc.). Without getting into a complex discussion of control charts here, the basic concept is that there is an average or mean level of performance of the process such as: Number of volunteers that show up at the Humane Society Animal Shelter on weekdays.



The process has upper control limits (the most the shelter has ever handled is 25 volunteers showing up at once) and a lower control limit - (there are always at least ten volunteers that consistently come on any given weekday). As these numbers are monitored over time, an 'in control' process would be a weekday with anywhere from ten to twenty volunteers. If there are fewer than ten, or more than twenty five, then this represents a unique event that 'stands out' for further attention. Why did only seven volunteers show up on a particular day? Why did twenty nine show up on another day?

Regularly analyzing the causes of variation vs. the trends over time will naturally lead you towards understanding or eliminating the special causes of variation. You can form a hypothesis for what needs to change, test the changes and monitor whether or not results are different. Over time, as you tinker and adjust your processes with

increased attention and focus you should be able to tighten your control limits so more of the events that occur are closer to the average. This level of increasing process control will allow you to be more consistent with customers where it counts. There is a lot more to learn about control charts, designing them correctly and analyzing them accurately that goes beyond the scope of this book, but anyone interested in tight control of repeatable processes- especially those affecting excellence could benefit by learning more. ²

2. SPC Simplified-Practical Steps To Quality, Robert T. Amsden, Howard E. Butler, Davida M. Amsden, Quality Resources, White Plains, New York. 1989.

Systems

Systems provide the valuable data stream of information and measurement that can be used to manage and control performance and delivery of excellence. Becoming familiar with the Values Of Excellence will help insure that you are monitoring the right things. There are many types of systems³ that can be created to continuously measure and monitor the Values Of Excellence.

3. Many tool descriptions excerpted from The Memory Jogger, Tools for Continuous Improvement and Effective Planning, Michael Brassard & Diane Ritter, GOAL/QPC, Methuen, MA 1994.

Check Sheets

Check sheets are simple methods of counting or accumulating data. Number of complaint calls, number of adopted pet returns, which day of the week more retail customers come in the front door and at what times, number of sales calls made to each region, which items sell the most for breakfast, how many times the cashier says "good morning" and similar types of data can be systematically recorded and compiled-mostly by front line operators.

Historical data can also be added to check sheets where it is available. Check sheets help build a clear picture with each observation of the real facts that help patterns in the data become obvious quickly. Check sheets are designed to be clear, complete and easy to use. Check sheets are often a vital part of a complete detailed analysis of a particular key performance indicator. Here's an example of weekend breakfast orders.

| Breakfast Orders | March | | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | Ttl |
| Burritos | ll | lll | lll | 8 |
| Pancakes | llllllll | llllllllll | lllll | 23 |
| Scramb Eggs | llllllllllllll | llllllllll | llllllllllllll | 39 |
| Bagel Plate | llllllll | llllll | lll | 18 |
| Steak n Eggs | llll | llllll | lllll | 15 |
| Total | 38 | 41 | 24 | 103 |

Key Performance Indicators

KPI's have a number of complex definitions depending upon the industry, but the central idea is that there are a few heavily weighted or high leverage factors of high importance where you really want to 'watch that basket'.

After examining your organization through the lens of the Values Of Excellence you may determine for example, that shipping your product within twenty four hours is a critical factor that leads to re-orders if you do it on time, or loss of customers if you are late. Monitoring order fulfillment time is very important and therefore one of the systems you want to set up to monitor closely.

After in depth analysis of your organization, and a little brainstorming and creativity, you should be able to identify critical areas within your own product or service delivery systems that can be improved.

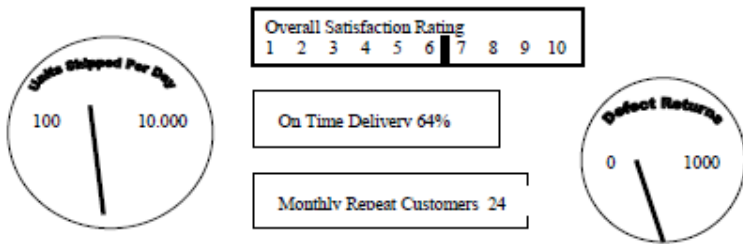
Dashboards and Scorecards

A collection of your 'Key' or 'Critical' Performance Indicators can be combined in your own customized 'Dashboard' or 'Scorecard' report. Large corporations use highly developed and well integrated systems of analysis for near real time feedback across the entire organization. Without hiring a team of consultants to build a super sophisticated system, try to develop your own ways to measure and monitor the Values Of Excellence.

There are many things you can combine in a report that should be easily accessible so information can be shared

and evaluated by all those involved. The frequency that the dashboard is updated depends upon how quickly you need to know when one of the needles goes into the red zone and how quickly you can do something about it before your organizational machine overheats.

Dashboards and scorecards are great monitoring tools as long as everyone agrees on what needs to be measured and is in agreement about what represents the green, yellow and red zones.



Strategic Planning

The Values Of Excellence as a set of key performance metrics need to be integrated into the annual Strategic Planning process for any organization, preferably with at least bi-annual reviews. It is too easy for organizations to get lost in the trees of production and delivery detail, contracts, financing and the like without taking a step back to examine the fundamentals of excellence and their customer-supplier relationships.

"What can be done to improve? " is an ongoing conversation in each department rather than a once a year event. The annual strategic planning process may be

where next year's budget allocations are decided but it shouldn't be the first time everyone sees the satisfaction data that effects their department or job function.

An effective weekly system of collection, integration, and analysis of strategic excellence data can be 'rolled up' into a strategic report with macro trend analysis, return on investment, and projections for increased sales and the like according to identified trends.

The Values Of Excellence Audit data is a welcome component of any organization's 'current state analysis' component during the traditional annual strategic planning process.

People- Communication, Training, Empowerment, Teamwork

One task of leadership is not to put greatness into people, but to elicit it, for the greatness is there already. -John Buchan

If you are a supervisor, manager, boss or company owner, driving excellence means involving, guiding, and influencing others. The larger the organization, the more apparent it will be that you can't do it on your own. Communicating what is important needs to happen clearly, repeatedly and often.

How else will employees and coworkers know what the priorities should be? Clear and common understanding is the beginning of alignment. Alignment means coordinating everyone's efforts in the desired direction.

Increased competitiveness as an organization comes from this kind of alignment.

A big part of what needs to be communicated to the workforce with the values of excellence are the connections between each employee's job and the delivery of World Class levels of product and service delivery. Each needs to understand that not only is their job important but what the key performance indicators are for their work product that relate directly to a specific positive or negative effect the customer will experience. Without this understanding, employees might waste time and energy in wrong directions.

From the FedEx driver who knows he absolutely has to get it there on time, to the customer service department who knows which items are in stock in the warehouse for overnight shipping in an emergency, to getting a cup of coffee in front of a new breakfast customer as fast as possible - all employees need to feel a direct connection between what they do and how it affects the customer.

Training in the values of excellence is beneficial for everyone in any organization. Having a common language and awareness of the factors that will positively influence customer satisfaction will save time and energy by making various decisions in regards to what's important - obvious throughout the supply chain. Employee focus will shift from the confusion of detailed work standards to the focus of satisfying the customer.

Awareness of the impact of individual employee behaviors and more clarity about 'what the boss is looking for and why' will add a new level of productivity and lessen mistakes and rework. It might sound trite, but embracing the Values of Excellence on an individual worker basis will add pride in workmanship and clarity of purpose that helps with individual worker self esteem, and a feeling of involvement and ownership.

World Class Leaders are promoters of teamwork in the organization, and want to leverage the synergy of the workforce to focus on becoming excellent. These leaders know that employee involvement works. Employees should be involved in brainstorming process improvements, examining trends in data, and celebrating when higher levels of performance are achieved.

Collaboration between departments can be built by reviewing Excellence Audit results together especially when it is apparent that interdepartmental hand offs could be improved. Objective data has a way of quieting office politics and differences by helping everyone focus on the critical values tied to creating excellent customer supplier relationships.

Once the Values Of Excellence are understood and prioritized, Individual employee and manager performance reviews can include a connection to improving vital metrics for on time delivery, error free processes, staying within control limits, increasing customer satisfaction survey scores, repeat orders, raising

number of unsolicited new customers and a host of similar performance metrics. Measuring, and rewarding the Values Of Excellence builds them into the DNA of the organization.

Relationships With Customers

“Customers want to have a relationship”

Excellence means gathering real customer data so you can perform at the highest levels. Customer Satisfaction Surveys can be designed to happen continuously or once a year, be included with every box shipped for a continuous data stream of feedback, or be implemented as high involvement focus groups and interviewing for a more in-depth understanding of customer preferences, impressions, wants and needs.

Satisfaction measurement can also prompt for comparison with competitors, market research, new product introduction ideas and reasons why the customer doesn't shop with you anymore. Ideally a systematic satisfaction data collection methodology can include multiple components such as exit interviews, pen and paper surveys, email surveys and focus groups and be administered throughout the year in different ways.

When it comes to the customer relationship it is important to get ‘depth of understanding’ from customers including comparison with the competitor's products and services.

Customer Satisfaction data is strategic data. *World Class Leaders* will have improvement targets for each of the Ten Values of Excellence, have a relationship improvement plan in place and be working on it through the normal course of doing business.

Eventually the organizational culture will shift to an 'excellence' customer-focused culture. This is where the real magic happens. When employees and managers go from understanding of customer satisfaction priorities to using their own initiative to do the right thing - your organizational culture will have changed for the better.

Structural Factors

Many have made the mistake of having knee jerk reactions to negative feedback or low performance data and have run out and spent a lot of money on a potential solution that didn't work. A restaurant completely changes their menu, a manufacturer takes on a new product line, a public golf course buys a large billboard advertisement etc. Most times enterprises take action without adequate data or perspective. The Organizational Audit of Excellence drills down into the detail of the organization and creates precisely the type of perspective managers should have before committing to big changes. Especially important for some will be the competitor analysis. A business such as a restaurant is actually competing directly with all of the other

restaurants in a specific demographic area. The decisions to 'beat the competition' rather than making some arbitrary improvement might be much more strategic – once the dynamics of comparison of the Values Of Excellence are considered.

Adding staff might make sense if customers aren't being taken care of adequately. Better signage might be a good investment if customers are having a hard time finding you. Chasing out the ill tempered regulars from your bar might be called for if new customers aren't comfortable.

The key is to make your big structural changes with good data in hand and with a well founded objective in mind. If you have made a good study of Excellence, the structural changes you invest in should pay for themselves and make good sense to everyone.

Your Commitment To World Class Leadership.

Whether you are a fortune 100 CEO, a frustrated mail room clerk, or counting the last weeks until your unemployment benefits run out you'll have to make a big decision- if you are going to focus on 'excellence'. Like Moses, you need to go to the mountain and have a good long talk with the guy up there- or whatever your process is, and then decide if you are going to come down with some tablets and start leading needed changes.

From up there on the mountain you can see the need pretty clearly, the potential, and the route to get to a higher level of excellence. That walking across the

desert for forty years part looks pretty intimidating though. You know the saying about anything worth doing.. but will you do it?

Maybe there are some rationalizations that will make swallowing a pill this big, a little easier:

1) Realize that time will go by at the same rate, your organization, or company or your job already has a speed and trajectory established. Doing nothing differently will take a certain number of calories anyway. Why not expend your calories on becoming more excellent?

2) Things are probably not all bad. You won't have to reinvent or fix everything, certainly not all at once anyway. The key is to begin, look for low hanging fruit and get some momentum going. Implementing the Values Of Excellence is a process, and achieving World Class Status is a very specific destination that will take a lot of work, whoever you are. When you get there is when you work this excellence process over time.

3) The possibility definitely exists that this will not only work, but will work well when you keep after it. You could achieve levels of success that you did not dare think were possible in the past. World Class Leadership is a statistically reliable and robust business excellence methodology that will work for you - if you work it.

4) It is inherently more satisfying to be in the hunt for excellence than to feel like tomorrow is another day of mediocrity. It is exciting for everyone to be chasing

excellence, especially once you get it going. Your customers will experience you relating to them differently, your employees will find new purpose in their work, each department will gain a refreshed sense of and focus on what's important.

5) Ok now don't get too big of an Ego about this, but if you implement the Values Of Excellence, you are a leader and will be standing for excellence. Not only is that a big responsibility, but it will have the effect of other's looking to you for answers, guidance, and yes- Leadership. You'll be equipping yourself and those around you to compete hard, raise the quality of everything they do and to stay focused on it.

When you eventually integrate these philosophies into your ken, you will start to see the Values Of Excellence as the answer to many things. When others ask, "What the heck can we do about 'X'? You are going to have answers, and insight into not only symptoms of problems but insight into root cause oriented solutions. Such is the universal nature of this foundational knowledge of excellence.

6) You can sleep better at night knowing that implementing excellence in your organization, small business, department, low-level job or personal life is always the right thing to do.

Appendix

In our consulting practice we adapt the same criteria to customized large external customer satisfaction surveys which are distributed on a large scale as a more formal study, with accompanying demographic groupings, market research questions and more. External Customer Satisfaction Surveys are an important component of a comprehensive system to capture data about excellence.

It is often revealing to compare the external customer perceptions with internal employee or manager perceptions of the same criteria to see where disconnects or misconceptions are occurring, and where comparison is in total agreement. If your organization as a whole is interested in embracing excellence, you should be doing this.

To use the Organizational Audit Of Excellence, realize that your opinion is only one perspective. If we asked everyone in your department to complete the audit and then averaged all of your answers, the results would be somewhat different from each person's individual perspective.

This is a good thing to do for everyone who might potentially be involved in making changes and improvements to achieve a higher level of excellence, so you have the opinions and support of others in the organization when you begin making changes.

Bart Allen Berry Consulting Offers the following services which may be of interest:

Besides offering the Online Organizational Audit Of Excellence online for individual reports, we can also administer audits for groups from four to forty thousand. Sub grouping and segmentation of data by location dept etc. is also available for individual unit reports and roll up reports with individual units compared with the overall population etc.

In person delivery of Audit reports and findings

Achieving Excellence Training programs for employees and managers

Administration of organization-wide organizational development consulting and transition to excellence.

Contact us: BartBerryConsulting@Gmail.com

About the Author: Bart Allen Berry is a veteran consultant, trainer and speaker who has delivered organizational development programs to more than 200,000 employees and managers in six countries. Visit [Bart Allen Berry Consulting](#) for a complete list of additional books and organizational assessment tools.