

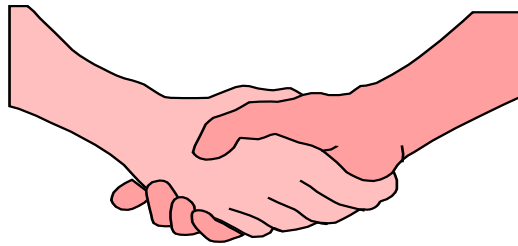
## Continuous Improvement / Quality Management

### Introduction

Continuous improvement is a long-term business strategy to improve your business in terms of customer value and satisfaction, quality, speed to market, flexibility and reduced cost. One of the principal objectives of continuous improvement is to increase the skills and capacities of all the organisation's employees so they can effectively engage in problem solving.

## INITIATING CHANGE

- When initiating change remember “People support what they create”



### Author's experience with Continuous Improvement / Quality Management

While the author was employed in a senior OHS role with a major Australian organisation he was involved in implementation of a robust approach to Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.

Some of the initiatives were-

Customers were spoken to in order to define what the customers wanted from the organisation.

The work necessary to ensure success in meeting customer needs was identified.

How to carry out the work necessary for success was defined.

Detailed work instructions and working procedures were developed for core tasks necessary for success.

A document control system was introduced.

All employees received training in Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.

Continuous Improvement / Quality Management champions were appointed in major departments.

A senior manager was appointed to lead the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management effort.

There were regular audits of the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management system.

All employees were actively encouraged to question the efficiency of the work they did and suggest continuous improvement initiatives.

There were regular meetings and other communications about the Continuous Improvement / Quality Management.

An extremely aggressive approach to upgrading employee skills in all areas was embarked upon after an exhaustive learning needs analysis.

Since leaving this organisation the author has worked in organisations that have had no Continuous Improvement / Quality Management systems or systems, that while they have had their systems pass certification audits, do not really have a continuous improvement philosophy.

Some of the things he has noticed in these organisation are-

Customers, both internal and external, complain that their needs are not being met.

Work processes are dependent on the knowledge of individuals rather than defined procedures. When Fred goes on long service leave for 3 months the organisation struggles because how to do some of the things Fred does are only known by Fred.

The bureaucracy and bull-shit swamps the organisation and impedes efficient operation.

Communication is confused and inefficient.

Responsibilities are unclear.

Employees mutter about how ineffective some of the work they do is and their efforts to improve things with their supervisors fall on deaf ears.

Politics rather than efficiency shape practice.

Those who question procedure and practice quickly learn this is not an approach received favourably by management.

Employees talk to others who do similar work and realise there are better ways of doing things.

Some of the workforce are un-empowered and dissatisfied with their lot.

Management is perceived as being remote from the real needs of the business and not interested in the thoughts of the employees.

The learning function is under-developed and attendance at learning is guided by un-structured approaches rather than thorough learning needs analysis.

The author's observation is that many organisations have Continuous Improvement / Quality Management systems that are only partially enacted and do not reap all the benefits to be gained from these systems .

Question

In these economic times can your business survive without a continuous improvement philosophy?