

QUALITY AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The key to any business is a customer. Unless a business provides a product or service that its customers recognise as meeting or exceeding their requirements, the business will not succeed in the long term. This is applicable to all sectors – private and public. To meet or exceed customers needs, it is necessary to provide a quality product or service.

The paper will include in its discussion, what is quality and what is the cost of quality to a business. It is not uncommon in a service industry, like the surveying profession, for the cost of achieving quality to be more than 30% of total revenue of a business. The cost of quality includes the costs of prevention, of inspection and of failure. The total 'cost of quality' reduces as the quality improvement process proceeds, prevention costs increase, while inspection and failure costs decrease.

It will look at the benefits of a customer service charter, as well as the 2000 version of ISO9001. The ISO 9001:2000 document is very positive from a surveyors perspective, as a technical profession surveyors weaknesses have tended to arise in relation to the broader management controls, this version provides an ideal framework for considering, implementing and monitoring the important management issues of any business.

The implementation of a quality customer service as part of the path to continuous improvement can be considered in three stages:

- Creating the environment for quality;
- Quality improvement;
- Continuous business improvement.

In a competitive market place, it is rarely wise to stand still and give competitors the opportunity to race past you. Hence it is worth remembering that **Quality is a journey not a destination**, and that it is an on-going process that should never end.

Using ISO 9001:2000 and having a Customer Service Charter as part of standard business practice provides an ideal framework to demonstrate to customers that the organisation does value its customers and wants to provide the best service possible.

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