



Critical SHIFT

*The Future of Quality in
Organizational Performance*

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Summary

PART I: Trends and Forces Affecting Organizational Performance

Five forces are having a major impact on the practice of quality and the success of organizational performance initiatives. These forces, represented by the acronym CHAOS, describe the environment in which organizations will be operating over the next decade:

- C** hanging definition of work and the workplace
- H** eightened social responsibility
- A** ging baby boomers
- O** verarching demographic change
- S** trategic growth through technology and innovation

Collectively, these five forces, which are part of the surface chaos, hint at the existence of some kind of convergence – hidden structures and patterns of interactions – below the surface.

As a result of these environmental forces, five overarching trends have recently emerged in the practice of quality and are influencing the manner in which organizations are approaching performance improvement. These trends are represented by the acronym SHIFT:

- Quality goes Softer
- Quality goes into Hiding
- Quality goes Integrative
- Quality goes Far-flung
- Quality goes Technical

The softer side of quality acknowledges that long-term sustained business results can no longer be achieved without addressing the social, psychological, and emotional needs of employees. *“Today, I use the ‘q’ word less and less. The word ‘quality’ just has too much baggage now and creates more bias and surfaces old paradigms for many.”* – Alan Backus, Exide Electronics

Thus, the challenge is to measure employee satisfaction and tie it directly to profitability. It is also important to realize that employee satisfaction is not one dimensional – that there are differences due to culture, lifestyle, and demography.

Although the word quality began to fall into disfavor in the early 1990s, it does not mean that organizations have abandoned quality initiatives. In fact, many companies have become so competent at practicing quality management that it has achieved a level of “unconscious competence.” In these enterprises, quality concepts, tools, and methods are so intertwined with the work of the organization that they have become part of the job, not separate from it. Thus, there is no longer a need for people to talk about “doing” quality.

Two decades ago, the term quality was used to describe the use of total quality tools by individuals in technical

units. Now, the concept of quality has evolved from a rigid set of TQM prescriptions to a synergistic set of flexible approaches and principles. This set of approaches – the five fields of performance practice (Quality Assurance, Problem Resolution, Alignment and Integration, Consumer Obsession, and Spiritual Awakening) have the collective purpose of achieving and sustaining market leadership and competitive advantage over extended periods of time. In addition, quality has become far-flung. There is increasing interest in the process throughout many countries in Europe, Asia and the Pacific Rim, and South America, which are mounting national efforts to increase quality awareness.

Finally, because the basic tools of quality are no longer sufficient to achieve the levels of performance that today’s organizations need in order to sustain market leadership, highly sophisticated, technical, statistically based tools (e.g., Six Sigma and its accompanying contingency tables, t-tests, design of experiments, and regression analysis) have become more important in the achievement of business results.

PART II: Exploring the Starburst Model™

The Starburst Model™ is based on the metaphor of the starburst galaxy and combines the five forces of CHAOS and the five fields of performance practice. Starburst galaxies furiously convert solar masses of gas into large numbers of massive stars, which results in the release of enormous amounts of sustained energy over time as a result of disruptive forces in a galaxy. In the model, the forces of CHAOS are the workplace forces that disrupt organizations in the global business environment (i.e., the galaxy). As a result, newborn stars (i.e., potential fields of performance practice) form quite regularly.

Quality Assurance, the first field of performance practice, has been evolving for thousands of years. Its purpose, as practiced today, is product and service conformance to customer requirements as specified or implied by a “contract”. Although ensuring conformance is key to the success of later fields of performance practice, some shortcomings exist. First, the concept of continual improvement of product, process, and service

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is not pervasive here. Once conformance is achieved, no motivation for further improvement exists. Second, this field is reactive to customer needs and expectations; so, little attention is given to anticipating these needs. And, third, because top management involvement is minimal, quality may not be a strategic focus for the organization. It is because of these shortcomings that the second star in the model emerged — the Problem Resolution field of performance.

The purpose of Problem Resolution is to improve both bottom-line performance and customer satisfaction. Improving either one at the expense of the other can cause

“The existence of a functional quality system gives us stability and documentation and allows us to share lessons learned.”

– Marie Baucom Williams, Tennessee Quality

an enterprise to fail. The outcomes of the activities in this field are reduced costs, improved performance, and improved customer satisfaction. Although many believe that improved customer satisfaction is the inevitable result of improved performance and reduced costs, this may not be the case. Therefore it is essential to focus on all three outcomes.

In Problem Resolution, the use of the PDCA Cycle and process management enhances the continual improvement mindset. Process management also stresses customer focus. Organizational productivity and performance constraints begin to be addressed through problem-solving efforts. And, management takes on more responsibility for quality and performance by creating systems in which cross-functional and natural work teams can achieve their goals.

Nonetheless, improved customer satisfaction, reduced costs, and improved performance are not always realized – perhaps due to the shortcomings inherent to this field of performance practice: Working on well-defined individual problems sometimes results in a negative impact on the performance of the organization as a whole. There is no guarantee that customer requirements and efforts in problem solving and continual improvements can be linked to overall market strategy, key organizational systems, daily work processes, supplier requirements, organizational structure and culture, and employee satisfaction. The potential exists for conflict between multiple improvement and problem-focused initiatives. A systematic approach

to innovation is lacking. And, there is no focus on the organization’s cultural elements and how they interact with the more strategic and operational aspects of the business.

The Alignment and Integration field of performance practice – the third star – emerged to address these shortcomings. Thus, the purpose of this field (which is strategic in nature and heavily involves management) is to ensure that all organizational work contributes to achieving the organization’s mission, vision, and plans. Through this field, the enterprise can improve organizational effectiveness, eliminate barriers and unnecessary work,

and improve overall customer and employee satisfaction. As before, however, shortcomings still exist, including a predisposition to attend

to internal issues at the expense of the customer, a continued lack of a systematic approach to innovation, and the inability to anticipate market trends based on unknown customer wants and needs.

In the Consumer Obsession field – the fourth star – being obsessed implies anticipating what will bring value to customers (some of whom may not even be known today) by uncovering latent market wants and needs and translating them into offerings that bring value. This field has been emerging over the past 100 years, with brand management leading the way, and its purpose is to promote the long-term survival of the organization.

The underlying concepts of consumer obsession – value creation, organizational renewal, mass customization, and lifetime relationships with customers – arise out of CHAOS. This is a significant move beyond customer responsiveness (the first star) and customer focus (the second and third stars). Its introduction of a systematic approach to innovation addresses the shortcomings of alignment and integration, broadening their scope by suggesting that value-creation based philosophies, concepts, tools, methods, and strategies also need to be deployed across and throughout the organization’s work processes and employee behaviors.

Although it is difficult to determine what limitations might arise from this field (because it is still emerging), some important issues need to be resolved. First, the required techniques are either rudimentary or nonexistent, causing organizations not to recognize that consumer

obsession is different from customer focus. As a result, relationship marketing, mass customization, and innovation are not given the attention they merit – an either/or mindset still prevails over the more effective both/and perspective. Second, this field lacks an appreciation for and understanding of the connectedness among all living things. It is this last issue that is spurring the emergence of the fifth star – Spiritual Awakening.

Until this point, fields of performance practice concentrated on the enterprise, either in part or as a whole. But with Spiritual Awakening, the focus is on a higher-order value, the purpose being to improve life for everyone on the planet and to manage the planet as a system. This purpose serves as the umbrella under which the purposes and outcomes of the previous four fields need to be achieved. Thus, the key underlying concepts are spirituality, organization as community, and social responsibility and accountability, while the tools and methods that support these concepts include new social contracts for employment, community building, social responsibility audits, and zero-emissions systems. This suggests that if organizations are to be truly productive, they must create, within themselves, a sense of spirit and commitment to something greater. The implication is that by first attending to a higher-order good, organizations will naturally reap the benefits of profitability, value, and quality. The purpose and outcomes also suggest that individually, people can bring their bodies, minds, hearts, and souls into the workplace.

Because Spiritual Awakening more effectively addresses the linkage and interconnectedness shortcomings of Quality Assurance and Problem Resolution, it is possible that the prevailing either/or mindset will give way to both/and. However, the immediate challenge of this field of performance practice is for it to gain the attention of senior management and to demonstrate its critical role in organizational performance.

PART III: Preparing to Use the Starburst Model™

Because the scope encompassed by the five fields of performance practice is extremely broad and growing, individuals must be proficient in the skills and knowledge that cut across all five performance practice areas as well those specific to each field. Generally, what is needed

are the abilities to communicate verbally and in writing, to act as an agent for change, to synthesize and analyze information, to coach individuals and teams, to help adults learn, and to use the appropriate technology.

As for quality professionals, the SHIFT in performance improvement has far-reaching implications. In addition to acquiring the fundamental skills and knowledge required by the fields of performance practice, quality professionals need also to acquire a greater breadth of business experience that goes beyond merely speaking the language of the business. They must know how the tools and methods they bring to the table apply to the core work of the organization. They must find ways to be strategically

“The real challenge is to keep up with the required learning.”

– Louis E. Schultz, Process Management International

linked to the key operations that define a business. And, they need to demonstrate, visibly, the many ways in which they can add value to the organization. Thus, it is critical that individuals enhance the breadth and depth of their skills/knowledge through ongoing education, broadening their reading base, networking, mutual learning, and technology-enabled learning. The challenge lies in making these avenues a part of daily habit.

When defining the behaviors that need to be enacted by anyone who has leadership responsibilities in the Starburst Model™, the acronym COMPASS can be applied, for it describes the behaviors that are common to planning, implementing, and evaluating all five fields of performance practice. These behaviors involve Connecting with change, Opening up and letting go, Managing polarities and meaning, Practicing unwavering integrity, Attending to the whole, Serving others, and Seeking self-knowledge.

PART IV: The Starburst Model™ -- Implications For Your Organization

Because quality and value are inseparable, the concept of value must be incorporated into the practices associated with the Quality Assurance, Problem Resolution, and Alignment and Integration. The concepts and many of the practices associated with these three fields should be put in place before there is any attempt to fully implement the concepts and practices associated with Consumer Obsession and Spiritual Awakening. This approach will minimize the shortcomings that may be experienced when implementing each of the five fields.

Nonetheless, due to the nature of change, issues will always exist. Organizations will have to decide what to name initiatives. They will have the challenge of retaining learning around the practices associated with the fields of performance practice. And they will need to develop the capability of actively embracing the fundamentals in each of the fields, while determining what is needed to enhance the existing concepts, tools, and methods within each performance practice.

As the practice of quality SHIFTS, and as organizations deal with the forces of CHAOS, departments and functions

“The quality professional could disappear or be modified (perhaps they will refer to themselves as change agents.”

– Lawrence Schein, The Conference Board, Inc.

that support performance improvement must completely rethink how to assist management in promoting quality and creating value. This determination can be approached using an eleven-step process:

1. Develop department purpose and title.
2. Delineate department roles, responsibilities, and relationships based on organizational needs.
3. Determine necessary skills and knowledge based on roles, responsibilities, and relationships.
4. Identify current department roles/responsibilities that no longer fit, and determine how to handle them in the future.
5. Identify department structure based on organizational needs, roles, responsibilities, and relationships.
6. Identify titles of department work processes (this can occur simultaneously with step 8).
7. Standardize department work processes (this can occur simultaneously with step 9).
8. Develop position descriptions and salary structure.
9. Implement new infrastructure.
10. Create employee development plans.
11. Implement employee development plans.

This process may result in growth, downsizing, dismantling, or transformation.

PART V: Your Career In Organizational Performance Improvement

If you are a professional who specializes in enhancing organizational performance, including those involved in internal and external quality, organizational development, human resources, training, marketing, finance, engineering, and information systems, you must take action to ensure your employability in the workplace of the future. First, you must take into account that CHAOS and the SHIFTS occurring in the practice of quality have “changed the job of quality professional from running an independent

department to becoming a desirable support partner to line managers.” Second, you must determine if this job description

is congruent with your own assessments of your career and vocation. If a mismatch exists, then you must decide whether to stay in the organization and attempt to take another position or create an entirely new one. If this is not possible, it will then be necessary to find new employment.

Becoming an external consultant GUIDE is one possible career option. These are performance improvement professionals who:

- G** et a handle on the client’s business,
- U** ndertake a project only if they can add value,
- I** ncorporate integrity into all of their interactions with others,
- D** evelop the client’s capabilities to work on their own, and
- E** ducate themselves continuously.

There are, of course, several factors to consider when making this decision, including why you want to become a consultant, what unique expertise you bring to the endeavor, and whether to join an established firm or start your own. It is also important to understand that major challenges exist regarding client relationships, managing the business, and your personal needs and priorities.

Appendix A: Representative Interview Questions

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*Chapter endnotes, a bibliography,
and a subject index are provided.*

Remarks

According to Silverman and Propst, the concept of quality, as used within the context of "total quality management," has fallen out of favor. However, it is not "dead" but is being replaced by concepts such as performance management and operational excellence – ideas that view quality as an integrated system of performance, delivery, organizational flexibility, and customer satisfaction. As a result, the practice of quality will merge with the field of management and totally transform it. No longer will management merely be the sum of accounting, marketing, human resources, etc.; it will be a completely integrated system focused on providing value to all stakeholders, including society. A further outcome will be the decrease in the number of traditional quality professionals and an increase in the number of quality practitioners – those who apply quality concepts, tools, and methods to facilitate strategic change.

Critical SHIFT is the definitive how-to guide for quality professionals who need to know how to effectively prepare for and respond to these major transformations. Key to this preparation and response is the innovative Starburst Model™, which provides a framework for systematically elevating quality and value creation to a strategic level that integrates all improvement efforts to achieve bottom-line results.

The work stands as a critical resource that provides an extensive review of the literature, a comprehensive theoretical analysis of an innovative new framework, and detailed point-by-point guidelines for practical application. This last feature is an important aspect of the book, which, for all intents and purposes, is an elementary primer and workbook that takes the reader step by step through all aspects of corporate culture so that quality can be successfully integrated for performance improvement. It contains questions (under the heading "Inner Exploration") and a series of worksheets throughout, provided to help readers actually apply the concepts, tools, and recommendations to their specific situations. And, in fact, most of the contents of Parts IV and V in involve things to do. Thus, Critical SHIFT is intended to

be used (as well as read) to create integrated initiatives that strategically and operationally promote quality and value creation.

Believing that professionals who specialize in enhancing organizational performance should spend as much time

"More and more, we are entering the age of the generalist, that individual who is able to juggle many skills, whether technical or interpersonal, in order to help manifest the type of change for which organizations clamor. I believe the most frequently overlooked critical skill is the need for effective listening, which entails listening with one's ears, eyes, and heart. Yes, listening with the eyes and heart. Think about it."

– Col. Liz Anderson, U.S. Air Force Reserve

improving themselves as they do their companies, Silverman and Propst offer actions individuals can take to ensure their employability in the future. Of course, timely "what-color-is-your-parachute" suggestions are always welcome and useful, given our chaotically shifting business environment. However, the information, as it is presented here, seems to be tacked on as an afterthought—albeit a well-intentioned one. The book dives into this material so abruptly (at the end of the book) that it takes a while for it to sink in how assessing one's vocation, career, and job has anything to do with improving organizational performance. But, even after you see the connection, you come to realize that three short chapters (Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen) don't seem to provide the thorough exploration the subject so aptly deserves. In fact, by itself, "Consulting: Becoming an External GUIDE" (the fifteenth chapter) is a rich enough topic, given the authors' unique perspective, to be expanded to book length. We can only hope that the authors will consider this their next must-do project.

Finally, the work asks (and, to a great extent, leaves unanswered) a particularly provocative question: "By the way, do you still call it quality when it becomes everyone's job?" Here again is food for further thought that promises to open up a whole new arena of exploration and dialogue and take business to a whole new level of quality management.

Reading Suggestions

Reading Time: 9 to 11 hours, 302 Pages

"How To Read and Use This Book" (page xxv of the Introduction) provides the necessary guidelines for how best to approach this work. We suggest that you read this section first and then go back and read the Preface and the unread portions of the Introduction before tackling the main text.

Every page is fairly bursting with blocks of direct quotes (Silverman and Propst have done a prodigious

amount of research and its all cited and well-documented) and boxed information, and the print is relatively small. So, be prepared for a slow pace. In addition, if you take the time to answer the "Inner Exploration" questions and complete all the worksheets (which the authors urge you to do), expect to add considerably to our estimated reading time.

We also recommend that you pay close attention to the extensive endnotes (there are 78 for the first chapter alone) and bibliography (16 full pages), for they provide a wealth of resources for further study.

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