

QUALITY SYSTEMS AND THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

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Interest in quality programs has never been greater than it is today. Many customers have instituted supplier rating programs in order to evaluate suppliers and encourage them to work toward quality.

During the last two years the frequency of supplier rating programs has increased dramatically from annual inspections to quarterly visits. Part of the quality movement encourages partnerships. This process requires close cooperation between the customer and supplier to achieve better service and higher quality goods.

The best known quality philosophies are those of Deming, Crosby, Juran, Japanese and ISO 9000. While each is somewhat different they are similar in that they encourage internal and/or external quality improvement. In choosing a quality program, it is important to consider the top management role. The ultimate success will depend upon management style.

Imperial Holly began its quality journey in 1991. Care has been taken to measure the quality commitment of management as well as employees. From this commitment data, it is possible to determine opportunities for training and trace the progress of the quality program.

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It is expected that so dramatic a change in the company will take several years. Rejection, followed by acceptance and assimilation are the logical course over time for everyone to accept quality as the way we work.

The idea that everyone contributes to the total effort is paramount. There are no unimportant jobs. All tasks must be completed successfully to become a quality supplier.

A total quality management survey of the sugar industry taken in January 1992 indicated that Deming and ISO 9000 were the best known quality philosophies. Most quality programs have been in place two years or less. The majority of the programs installed concentrated on manufacturing followed by purchasing and engineering.

Most sugar companies rated their success level as good and none thought themselves doing poorly. All recommended some type of quality program to others.

The reasons most companies decided to start quality programs were:

- * a desire to be the best they could.
- * improve efficiency and product quality.
- * competitors.
- * sharper customer focus.
- * customer request.
- * continuous improvement.

The benefits anticipated are customer satisfaction, employee motivation, survival, profit, productivity, and employee morale.

It takes time to change to a quality philosophy. The Japanese have been at it 30 years, some American companies 15 years and the sugar industry 3 years. What is important is that the sugar industry has started the quality journey and is aggressively working toward customer satisfaction.