

EVOLUTION TENDENCIES SPECIFIC TO THE FIELD OF QUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF KNOWLEDGE BASED ECONOMY

Roşca Remus

Universitatea din Oradea, Facultatea de Ştiinţe Economice

In the actual rivalry environment characterised by the exacerbation of the competition, quality is getting the most important factor. Sequel every organization has to consider a priority the improvement of their products quality. Set going from these realities, we consider convenient and interesting to present the most important tendencies in the field of quality, which understanding depends on the turning to account of numerous improvement opportunities.

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1.Introduction

In the actual rivalry environment characterised by the exacerbation of the competition, quality is getting the most important factor. Sequel every organization has to consider a priority the improvement of their products quality. Quality improvement is an organised way for generating a positive change, an advantage for the company. Appropriate to the current matter is this quote from W. Churchill: “To improve means to change; to be perfect means to change often”.

Set going from these realities, we consider convenient and interesting to present the most important tendencies in the field of quality, which understanding depends on the turning to account of numerous improvement opportunities.

2.Evolution tendencies specific to the field of quality in the context of knowledge based economy

Further we would relate and study thoroughly these tendencies and their implications also.

2.1.Integration of customers in the process of obtaining quality and bringing forth the value that was intended

This could be done by setting down the client to the following roles:

Customers are providers of information. We have to consider the following categories of information: information of the needs and exigency of our customers about the desired quality of our products (it is a special duty of marketing to obtain these kind of information); feed-back information about the grade of satisfaction after sau during the use of the product; know-how – not infrequently customers are very well informed and have gathered evidence in a specific domain, acquireing distinctive abilities. To improve the role of provider of information of clients organizations use the following methods: marketing research, customers telephone, customers loyalty club, virtual chat rooms, box of complaints, drive test, etc.

-Designing customer, who sets the structure and configuration of the product desired, or sets some quality features only (like endowments of an automobile, the configuration of a PC, the structure of television programes). Herewith assumes an extreme demasification, since every customer represents in the main a market niche. It is clear the abandon of standardizing in favour of personalization.

-Maintenance assuring customer. In the future bearers will offer a wide series of facilities (infrastructure + ability by instruction) for their clients in order to assure themselves the maintenance of the acquired goods. In this way they could secure considerable cost savings and advanced customer satisfaction.

-Carrying out services customer: e-banking services, services of transport and mounting (see IKEA sistem), self-service in the field of commerce. In most of the cases these situations provide advantages not only for the organization but for their customer too.

-„Opinion leader” customer, is generating intangible value for a brand by its image on the market. Also, he can play the role of a consultant for the actual or potential customers, providing them information and survey.

-Manager customer. This could mean the set up of a team of customers involved in the management activities of the firm. For exemple, the team could be involved in the launching on the market of a new product. Customers would always understand better the needs of their peers (we refer here to the people with the same sistem of values and lifestyle), unlike a manager who does not use the respectiv products. An actual exemple of manager customers is of the students who sit on the Board of Faculty where they study. In this way they have an approved understanding of the necessities of students, and can find more suitable solutions. Such a measure could be taken for the improval of a company’s image.

The turning to account of the right customer presented above it is possible only when you can rely on a mutual and advantageous partnership between him and you company.

2.2.Promotion of a holistic view, integrator of the process of quality improvement and the value creation chain

Suggestiv in this respect is the quote from professor Ion Stanciu: „ Today, more and more companies does not put their interest into quality programes for reducing deficiencies only. This is the traditional broach of activities ment to improve quality. Now the emphasis is put in the constitution of programes of quality by integration and correction of all the processes associated with quality during the long chain of value creation for the customers. Acting this way we can stimulate the whole potential not only of the company, but of the bearer’s and distrubitor’s too, in order to rise the value of the products/services dedicated for the customers with beneficial effects for the sales and the profits. ” We can’t exclude the customer itself from this value creation chain for customers, fact brought up in the previous chapter.

2.3.Proximity in time and space between the bidder organization and client, due to the modern means of transport and communication, especial the internet

The implications of these in terms of quality management:

-*easy communication*: presentation of products, informing (site, newsletter), customer’s feed-back (e-mails, chat groups, telephone);

-*easy acces and provision of service* like e-banking, e-learning, e-commerce, with an 24 hours/day availability;

- *reducing the carryinn out a product ordered by a customer*;

- *significant reduce of costs* not only for the seller but for the customer too;

- *possibility of checking the condition of the product or service ordered by the customer*.
Exemple: an order from an e-shop, a package sent by an express courier;

- *growing transaparency of the market* following the presentation of the offers in the virtual space, which let customers make the best choise. This situation determine organizations to focus on the continuous improvement of quality, and on offering superior value for their customers.

The existence of virtual space have created the premises of a similarity between preindustrial age of crafts and our contemporary information society under the appearance of customer’s feed-back. If in the age of craftsmanship the bearer met his customer face to face, now they can very easily connect using the virtual space.

2.4.Promotion of a holistic view in terms of the concept of quality by inclusion and recovery of intangible quality characteristics

Quality is not resuming only on product characteristics which fulfill the functions for which they were created; ie the quality of a product is not supposed to satisfy only the generic needs for which satisfaction it was projected (a car – the need of transport, a public food service – the need of food). In defining quality we have to keep in view the intangible quality characteristics too, the most important ones are:

- prompt delivery of the product, very important to keep in view de current business environment characterised by a remarkable dynamic;

- the set of services „joining” a product which it makes more accesible and interesting: payment methods, information methods, transport, installation, commissioning services, instructions, etc;

- the purchase experience of a customer determined by: the quality of relationship between the customer and bearer (professionalism, kindness, promptness, emotional intelligence) and the specific environment of space for sale;

- environmental friendly aspects of the product, are getting more and more important in the decision making of responsible customers;

- customer status achieved by the purchase of a good. We have to keep in view the prestige of a brand and the values this is promoting (exemple: exclusivity, prestige, safety, friendship, innovation, performance). These days, the decision of purchasing a product is also based on the wish of the customer to communicate his status to the others. Precisely why perhaps the greatest responsibility of marketing is the creation of a unique personality, unique even for the brand had in managing.

Relevant to the issues presented above is this quote from professor Ion Stanciu: „Quality is an emotional experience for the customers. They wish to feel good after purchasing a good, wisg to feel that have obtained the highest value. They intend to know their money were used to help and to be proud with associating themselves with a company obtaining a high quality image.”

2.5.Tranzition between the interest for quality standards type iso 9000 and the business models providing world class performance

Quality standards type ISO 9000 represent a ghide on which a company can base it’s quality management and would be capable to generate the quality promised their customers constantly. One of the purposes of a company’s authentication, according to these standards, is to rise the trust of employees and clients’ in the capability of offering the promised quality consequently; ie it is possible that two rivals to be certified according to the same quality standard even if their products on the market has eloquent difference in their level of quality. The target in the case of standards is represented by the quality promised to the market and it’s improvement in time.

Through the implementation of the business models which are providing world class performance (Sis sigma, Kaizen), companies follow to reach world ranking, and to excel. The target in the case of these business models is represented by the highest quality achieved at a global level, making an obsession from the continuous improvement of it. ISO standards can help a company to survive on the market, transforming to an elementary necessity, until world class performance providing business models assure succes only.

2.6.Integration of economic issues of quality in the sistem of financial – accounting indicators of a company

During a long period of time companies have slighted the importance of an objective and fix cost generating non-quality evaluation. This was due to issues like: the lack of understanding the scale of these costs (it is estimated that in some companies they can represent up to 20% of the incomes); inexistence of a unified approach, at the level of concept and practice, of the measuring sistem of the generated non-quality costs. Yet companies that apply value analysis for maximizing the rate between quality and costs in order to improve their competitiveness on the

market, understood the importance of the exact evaluation of these type of costs. Issues represent a premise for the initiation of improvement projects which will lead to the reduction of non-quality costs. Non-quality costs means not only costs generated by the internal non-conformities but the external shortcomings and lost opportunities also, due to a weak good-will of the company in terms of the quality offered (issue which is hard to quantify). In order to piloting a company managers need exact information about the costs and proportion of non-quality, being a relevant indicator of the companies overall performance. General Electric was the first american company which introduced a sistem of management based on costs of quality in 1946.

Only those companies would survive and would have succes on a highly concurential market who would consider these kind of tendencies.

2.7.Extension of concern for quality in all the spheres of socio-economical life of a society

Here we are talking about the central and local public administration, the activities of non-gubernamental organizations, educational institutions, health care sistem, cultural institutions, etc. Quality is not a unique concern of a profit based company anymore. This is the only way we can consider a significant improvement of a societies quality of life. Unfortunately, we have to admit that Romania has a lot more to do in this sense.

2.8.Quality becomes a priority for decision making factors at national level or at the level of supranational structures

A good exemple for this is the European Union, where a wide training campaign of „european quality culture” is taking place by: the achievement of a common infrastructure in quality management policy; the broadcast of a considerable amount of information of quality management policy in order to strenghten the unique european market; preparations of documents of the E. U. like the „European Quality Management Policy”, „The European Way Toward Excellence”, „European Programe of Quality Management Policy” – all of these provide measures for obtaining a strategic view of quality in all the member states. Understanding the importance of quality is evident in the next provision drawn from the „European Carta of Quality”: „In global economy, competition exists everywhere. To win, european products and services has to be the best if our continent requires to get a chance on the international market.” It is regrettable that decision making factors from the macroeconomic level in Romania poorley understood the importance of quality promotion in the means of growing national competitiveness on the global market.

Unfortunately many romanian companies did not understood the importance of quality like major factor in competitiveness, neither did understood the tendencies presented above. The role of quality in the actual global economy, characterised by a strenghtened competition is emphasized by Jech Welch: „Quality is the best guarantee for the loyalty of our customers, the best defence from foreign competition and the single way to a lasting growth and sustained gains.” All of these are demonstrating the fact that quality is a social responsibility. Consequently an individual, a company, the professional organizations, the employers’ organizations, civil society through partnerships and non-gubernamental organizations must get involved in obtaining quality due to the following advatages:

-Improving the competitiveness of economical organizations. „Quality has become a strategic element of global management for organizations, because it determines the competitiveness of products/services at a high national and international level”. This is due to the following implications of obtaining quality: increasing sales due to the superior grade of satisfacting the needs and exigencies of customers, customer loyalty, reducing of costs due to the improval of productivity (quality management aims the disposal of all the activities that are not adding value) and due the reduction of waste; recognition of the organization – the excellent quality obtained by an organization represents the most important marketing tool which could be used for it’s

promotion; development of a motivating environment – it has to be one of the best in terms of quality achieved, you have to set high quality as goal, which represents a challenge for the human resource of an organization; it stimulates the development and accumulation of knowledge in a company; it is a facilitator of change by connecting the company to the newest market tendencies (customer requirements, new technologies, etc.).

-Improving the competitiveness of national economy on the global market and is assuring macroeconomical balance. Relevant in terms of national importance of quality is the quote from A. Feingebbaum: „High quality products are the key of economical health for contemporary nations”. The health of organizations, specially determined by their competitiveness, would have the following implications on their national economy: generating bugetary resources for the local budget; creation of new jobs with positive effects on reducing unemployment; increasing incomes of the population with positive effects on the standard of life; contribution to the growth of the gross domestic product; it has a dinamic effect on economy simulating it’s development and of other fields and organizations; it has a contribution in the foundation of a national brand; it is a source of national pride when a brand is getting well known internationally; it is facilitating the accumulation of know-how not only for the economy but for the society also; it has a strong training role in the promotion of quality cult and in dissemination of management practices.

-It ensures the health of the population and the environmental protection.

-The growth of overall satisfaction of people in their capacity of customers.

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