

Use downtime to make quality improvements

Richard Colvin, Member, Silicon Valley Chapter

Do you frequently have slow periods, or downtime, right after you ship your product to production? Chances are many of you do. I am noticing a trend in the workgroups around me and in talking to others in the technical communication profession. I think we may be wasting some amount of time just after our products ship doing much of nothing. I have seen teams take as much as two months after the completion of a development cycle where the entire team just plans. This cyclical work pattern of planning and development is common place in many industries where technical communicators work.

Planning and assessment activities, although critical, create a slow period of production for all team members involved. You can improve the quality of your documentation by taking advantage of the downtime just after you ship your product to production. The amount and types of improvements you can make depend on the type of team you are working with. If you have multiple team members, pick one individual to focus on planning activities for the next release. Put everyone else to work on improving quality. If you are a team of one, pick one action you can take to improve quality and take action immediately.

Here are a few actions you can take to improve the quality of this information immediately:

- **Conduct a technical review.** When technical specialists review information under a time constraint, they may be less forthcoming about all the changes they would like to see. Conducting a review at a relaxed paced will allow the technical specialists to comment on things that they might not otherwise comment on. This is a great opportunity to improve the accuracy of information. Conceptual information, which is most often neglected, can especially be improved because your team can spend more time learning about the product and how to explain it. Immediately make changes to your product documentation.

- **Conduct a consistency review.** In software products particularly, a problem with inconsistency often arises when there are multiple writers and developers working on a project. Conducting a consistency review can help improve information by establishing the correct usage for terminology and phrasing, and identifying inconsistencies in the documentation and on the product interface. Immediately make changes to your product documentation.
- **Conduct a usability test.** Test your information with users to ensure that the final changes you made since the last usability test actually did improve the information. Get customer feedback on the organization of the information. Test for retrievability to determine whether the product users can find information they need. Immediately make changes to your product documentation.
- **Conduct a competitive analysis on competing product information.** Find out what your competitors are doing in documenting their products. If possible, buy the products, or find a way get a closer look at them. Analyze everything from how the information is delivered to the style of writing used. Pay close attention to content and the depth of discussion of conceptual information. Conduct a usability test on competing product information. Use the analysis and findings to identify content that may be missing in your product information. Immediately make changes to your product documentation.
- **Conduct a technical edit.** Once you have made changes to your product documentation based on the technical review, consistency review, usability test, and competitive analysis, turn the documentation over to a professional technical editor for review.

Find out what your competitors are doing in documenting their products. If possible, buy the products, or find a way to get a closer look at them.

See "Downtime" on page 4.

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Top 10 suggestions for writing poor documentation

David Dick, Senior Member, Belgium Chapter

A parody on writing, collected by David Dick.

1. Never use three words where you could use ten. Rambling, complicated phrases are vital for distracting your reader's attention.
2. Use a minimum of three acronyms in each sentence. At least one of these should remain unexplained - or the reader should be referred to an old or obscure manual for further information. Use the unexplained acronym constantly throughout the first two chapters.
3. Avoid plain language at all costs. Long and unfamiliar words are so much more impressive than short, precise ones.
4. Ideally, you should be describing products about which you know nothing and certainly which you have never used. This will ensure that both you and the user can have the fun of learning through experience.
5. If you must include diagrams, put them on a different page from the appropriate text. Make sure that all diagram references that appear close to each other, appear similar to one another, for example, Fig. 1.1.1.2, Fig 1.1.2.1.
6. Leave at least a dozen pages "intentionally blank". Insert them in the text where least appropriate.
7. Error messages are the most frequently required information in computer development, so try not to include these in a manual. If they cannot be avoided, make them as generalized and unhelpful as possible. Something along the lines of "locate source of error; remove bug; proceed" is good. A very handy phrase is "Probable user error; correct and resubmit". There is a good chance that this will induce uncontrollable fury in the reader.
8. All manuals should be cross-referenced to other manuals. A good proportion of these should be irrelevant, out-of-print or only available in a foreign language.
9. A random sprinkling of appendixes will help fill-out the end of your manual. Appendixes provide a splendid opportunity to conceal essential points amongst a mass of useless detail.
10. Spare no effort to think of a really good title. Titles should be composed of polysyllables and acronyms and be as similar to one another as possible. Remember there is no satisfaction in ascertaining subject matter simply by glancing at the title. The golden rule is this: A good title is complex, misleading and slightly too long to fit on the spine of a manual.

David Dick is a technical writer with Swift in La Hulpe, Belgium.

Quality SIG membership report

Robbie Rupel, Quality SIG Membership Manager

Greetings from St. Louis! As of September, the Quality SIG has 468 members, up from 393. Welcome to our newest international members from Canada, Denmark, France, India, Ireland, Israel, Norway, and Portugal, and to our newest domestic members from Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Guam.

In the last newsletter, I proposed devoting part of this column to profiling SIG members. To be fair, I asked for volunteers for the first profile. No one did. So...I will begin to actively recruit volunteers for the next newsletter.

The profile will be brief and will focus on the following questions:

- What do you do and where do you work?
- Why did you join the Quality SIG?
- What quality-related issues are you currently facing and how are you trying to resolve them?

Of course, you can still volunteer to be profiled by contacting me at rupel@inlink.com.

Until next time....

Processes subgroup

Larry W. Arnold, Senior Member, Lone Star Chapter

Perhaps it was the “early” hour of a most enjoyable breakfast meeting or maybe the discussions that continued at the SIG luncheon, but somehow I found myself agreeing to help out the Quality SIG. Then I found out that Lori needed a leader for the Processes subgroup. Now we’re off on a year-long process of our own.

So now I am trying to find-out just exactly what the subgroup can do for, or offer to technical communicators about processes that will improve their quality of life and not just the quality of the documentation process.

From the day we are conceived we are deeply imbedded in processes. Birth is a process, school is a process, grocery shopping is a process, and some think that even writing is a process. Some technical communicators argue that the preparation of documentation requires a process to have any hope of turning out a quality product.

I believe that the extent to which your company enforces a documentation development process can color your view of process as an aid (or hindrance) to quality. Even more helpful (or interfering) are the attempts to put metrics in place that might force us to examine the quality of our products. My point is: that like it or not, acknowledge it or not, life is a process—everything we do

is a process. The big key to me is the answer to this question: Is the end-product of that process important enough to me that I want to spend time examining the process, clarifying it, improving it, and repeating it enough times that I excel in producing it? If not, why bother?

Well, back to the subgroup - what can we do this year? The best answer I have is: “You tell me!”

One suggestion that I’ve heard is, a bibliography specific to process. Maybe the bibliography will help someone who has just discovered the term but needs to know more about it right now, or someone who thinks process is a four-letter word, or someone who has been continually improving the processes for 20+ years, aiming to achieve the highest quality product imaginable. Not an easy task given the scope but we have a good start in the general bibliography from the Quality SIG and I am confident that when the rest of us share the process wealth that we hoard, we can produce it.

What else can we do? You tell me, I’m open to suggestions.

Larry W. Arnold has returned to IBM working as a project manager out of the Kansas City, MO office after spending three years as a documentation manager at Gateway in South Dakota. Reach Larry at larryar@us.ibm.com.

From the day we are conceived we are deeply imbedded in process.

SIGNificant news

Lori Fisher, Associate Fellow, Silicon Valley Chapter

We love it when Quality SIG members engage each other in discussion and sharing of ideas. Did you know that there are almost 400 members in the Quality SIG? But less than 10% are actively involved in producing “deliverables” from the SIG, such as our newsletter, the web pages, the bibliography, or published articles and research on quality topics. We encourage you to engage in discussions on the listserv or in one of the other activities.

Below is a wonderful example of interaction among SIG members: an email letter to David Dick, the author of an article published in the Summer issue of DocQment. Keep those cards and letters coming! When we all participate, we all learn.

From: Robert Lessman

To: David Dick

Subject: Documentation as a solution

I have a classic story where the documentation corrected the product design defect. Two computers were supposed to work together seamlessly (on a government contract where each computer was built by a different vendor). If you turned on computer A first, or even simultaneously with computer B, it would crash when computer B came on.

To find the design defect would have cost millions of dollars to get the two defense contractors to talk to each other, find the defect, then implement a solution.

To save millions of dollars, the technical manuals warned that failure to make sure computer B was up and running before attempting to turn on computer A could lead to a mission-critical crash. This little trick worked.

Robert Lessman, (ASQ) Santa Clara, California.

I have a classic story where the documentation corrected the product design defect.

In the trenches

We got it right (almost)

Don Lenk, Senior Member, Washington, D.C. Chapter

We had spent many months writing the operation and maintenance manual for a complex training system for the Navy. It was a hybrid of old and new, commercial and custom-built equipment. It had many quirks and little secrets that we had ferreted-out and documented. We thought we had it all right, and we did, technically speaking.

After scores of hours operating the system, we had all the operations “down cold.” We could power the training system on and off, initialize it, run it, and stop it with our technical manual procedures. But there was one important thing we overlooked—the engineering development lab was laid-out for the convenience of the development engineers; it did not reflect the way it would be installed in the customer’s site; a school building.

While all of the lab equipment was in one open bay, the school’s installation covered several rooms and two floors. So we rewrote the power control procedures to keep the operators from running between rooms unnecessarily.

In some cases, our procedures had the operators check indicators that were clearly visible in the lab but not easily seen in the school. So we rewrote some procedures to check for alternate indications.

The maintenance console in the lab was next to the operator’s console, but in the school it was in

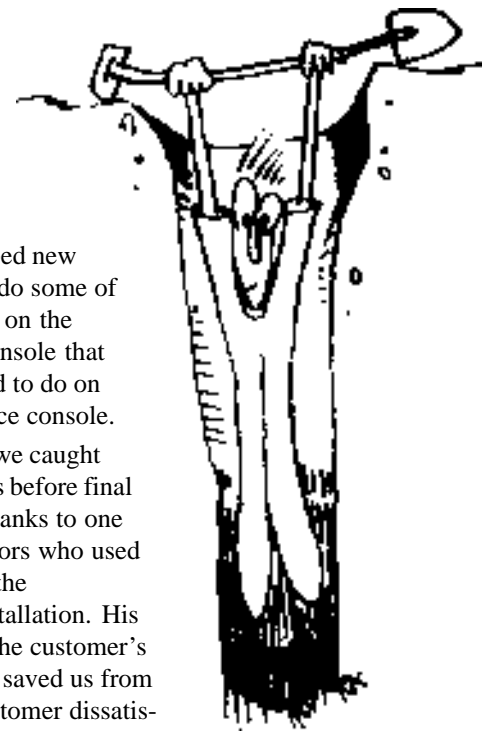
another room.

So we developed new procedures to do some of the operations on the instructor’s console that we had learned to do on the maintenance console.

Lucky for us, we caught these problems before final publication, thanks to one of our instructors who used the system at the customer’s installation. His awareness of the customer’s circumstances saved us from significant customer dissatisfaction.

The moral of this little true-life tale is: find out what your customers really need. Your end-user analysis should address not only their experience levels and the tasks they need to perform, but their physical environments and other circumstances as well. Even office politics may affect how you write your manuals. But that, as they say, is another story.

Don Lenk is an Advisory Information Developer with Lockheed Martin Federal Systems. His duties include documenting logistics support processes for ISO-9001 compliance.



The moral of this little true-life tale is: find out what your customers really need.

From "Downtime" on page 1.

A thorough technical edit should point out problems in style, organization, retrievability, clarity and concreteness, and graphic design, as well as finding typos and misspellings that raise questions in the mind of users about the quality of the documentation. Immediately make changes to your product documentation.

Immediately make changes to your product documentation. Why do I keep repeating that statement? If you take the actions immediately after the end of a cycle, you should be able to complete them in the few months before you

begin documenting new functions and features. If you don't, chances are you won't.

Making quality improvements early in the cycle has one other benefit. It can drastically reduce the amount of stress you may feel at the end of the cycle. You can rest assured that you started out with solid, high quality documentation as you moved into the middle of the cycle. Further, you will only need to review, test, and edit the new and changed information at the end of the cycle.

Richard Colvin is an information developer working for the IBM Corporation in San Jose, California.

Ed Deming: The patron saint of quality

Steven Jong, Senior Member, Boston Chapter

W. Edwards Deming (1900-1993) devoted his life to studying quality, first as a statistician and later as a world-renowned management consultant. He first visited Japan in 1950. In time he became revered as the man who almost single-handedly revived a national economy smashed by World War II. (Today Japan's highest award for quality is the Deming Prize.) Any comments I can make represent just the peak of the mountain of knowledge he developed.

Dr. Deming developed a system of statistical quality control, in which important process metrics are identified and tracked. The goal of the system is to reduce the observed variation of samples. (This is a mathematical way of saying that consistency equals quality.) The Japanese have used statistical quality control to manufacture products that are absolutely consistent in important, measurable ways. Manufacturing metrics are easy to devise; in Japan (indeed, around the world), entire factories operate under statistical quality control. Documentation metrics are more difficult to devise, but once you have numeric, goal-based metrics, you can apply statistical quality control. In a nutshell, here's how to do it:

1. Determine your metrics. Be sure you can take accurate measurements.
2. Measure samples in a statistically valid manner.
3. Chart the results over time. Determine the running average, the upper control limit, and the lower control limit. (Control limits are roughly one standard deviation above and below the running average.) This chart is called a run chart.

A simple run chart might show, for example, the defective percentage of a process, sampled daily, over the period of one month. If the samples fall within the control limits, the process is said to be in statistical control. A process in statistical control turns out a product of predictable quality.

Run charts are enormously powerful tools for assessing, visualizing, and improving quality. Here

is what Deming taught his disciples: Control limits are not specs, goals, or work standards! Rather, they are derived from the data; they are what they are. Some measurements will always be below average. (Deming heaped scorn on managers who failed to grasp this fact; today, "Dilbert" has taken up his cause.)

The average and control limits change over time. Increasing quality means reducing the error rate and achieving tighter control limits. In the Deming system, what causes variations (errors)? Points outside the control limits can usually be traced back to unique occurrences or individual workers, and those "special" errors you correct first. Indeed, the stereotypical manager thinks all errors are caused by lazy, careless, incompetent workers. But Deming threw the gauntlet squarely back at management. Half a century of measurements convinced him that most errors are "systemic," having common causes traceable to faulty materials, work procedures, tools, or training; all of these are the responsibility of management. Deming said up to 94% of all problems were common. It is worthless to fault workers for common causes of error (that is, wide control limits); the fault lies with management. (As you might imagine, his seminars were excruciating for CEOs.)

Do his numerical techniques apply to information products? I certainly think so—they've worked for everything else! Here are a few ideas for process-oriented information quality metrics. Do you have your own ideas? Let us know!

- Time to write a page.
- Time to edit a page
- Percentage of facts defective per page
- Variation in days from estimated project length

Next time: Documentation and quality assurance (QA) programs

Steven Jong is Documentation Group Leader at Lightbridge, Inc. in Waltham, Massachusetts. You can reach him at SJong@lightbridge.com.

Deming heaped scorn on managers who failed to grasp this fact; today, "Dilbert" has taken up his cause.

A quality program for the solo practitioner

Miki Magyar, Senior Member, Rocky Mountain Chapter

Your quality program is always a work in progress, but it can't progress if you don't start.

A formal quality program is as useful for the solo practitioner as it is for an organization. Whether you are a one-person documentation department or an independent, formalizing quality procedures pays-off in many ways.

A quality program defines your quality goals, what they are, and how you demonstrate that you have achieved them. You don't need a massive Mil-Spec tome; one or two pages are probably enough to specify what you are already doing. The important thing is to use it, once you have it.

Your quality program should save you time and effort in the long run by minimizing re-work and confusion. The combination of formal publication plans and a formal quality program can ensure that the work you do is appropriate, that is it done right the first time (or at least the second), and that it is satisfactory to your clients. With a quality program in place, you will impress clients with your professionalism. You can add it to your resume or flyer—All work is performed under a formal quality control program. Details on request.

To create your quality program, start by listing the things you already do that could be considered "quality assurance", for example, generating or using style guides, using standard references, doing copy and content edits, and having clients review documents.

If you are not using a written publication plan as part of your process, start now. It should specify things such as, the purpose of the document, the audiences, who provides content, what the content will be, when reviews will happen and who performs the reviews, graphic content and sources, output formats required, and so on. All the little details that can come back to haunt you can be specified up front. If they can't be done yet, use a

two-part agreement where the first part is to scope the project to the point where you *can* do a detailed publication plan.

Flowchart or list the steps in your process. The first step is: "Each project is defined by the publication plan." Include examples of review guidelines, edit checklists, and other VOE - Verifiable Objective Evidence as attachments. These are the keys to a formal quality program; the things that prove you met it.

Show who is responsible for generating the VOE items. For example, if you require your client to sign off on the pubs plan (and you should), show this in the flowchart. If you can provide a signed checklist for each round of editing (and you should), show this too.

Your quality program is always a work in progress. Once you have the flow chart of your process, keep refining it with each new project. Remember that it should not add to your overhead, but simplify and streamline your processes. The cost of doing the paperwork is minimal.

If you already use a formal quality program, I'm very interested in the details.

One of the most frequent complaints of solo practitioners is the difficulty in doing a really good edit on something you have seen too many times. I suggest that you form a copy-edit co-op with one or more of your peers. And since you can give them the style guide and publication plan along with the copy, they can do a really good edit.

Miki Magyar is a Senior Technical Writer at McData Corp. in Colorado and teaches technical communications as Adjunct Faculty at Metropolitan State College in Denver. Reach her at mikim@mcddata.com.

Visit the STC Quality SIG web site at <http://stc.org/pics/quality/>

If you aren't already signed up for the discussion on our listserv, send an email to majordomo@stc.org and in the body of the message enter: `subscribe stcqsig-l youremail@address` (The character at the end of `stcqsig-l` is a lowercase L)

To post a message for others on the listserv to see, send an email to stcqsig-l@stc.org.

Quality as I see it!

Guru Kamath

"I know it when I see it." This is one of the best quality definitions that I have seen. In the Quality Department at Citicorp Software I edited the seven volumes of the Standards and Procedures Manual (S&P). I have a fair idea about Quality and how it is achieved. The S&P have everything from Programming Standards to standards for apartments rented for the employees, to the appropriate salutation in emails (whether it is email or e-mail or E-mail is also a standard in the Manual of Style). As a ten-year-old company, Citicorp Software in India is at Process Maturity Level 4 in the SEI-CMM (Carnegie Mellon's Software Engineering Institutes's Company Maturity Model). It is one of the 20 or so software companies that have reached this level globally. It is not hard to see how they achieved it. They documented what Quality meant to them and they implemented it.

The Emirates Bank International at Dubai also has volumes of procedures for their business. I edited the standards for the Computer Department for this bank. Also in India, I edited the Quality Documents for a company that will eventually seek ISO 9000 certification.

Can a one year old company like JMT achieve Quality? Sure. We plan to do that by instituting and documenting the Quality procedures and practices that all of us bring with us. Each of us has several years of experience in our fields of expertise. We can share that by documenting good work practices. There is no need to re-invent the wheel every time someone wants to drive. When the standards are available somewhere, everyone starting on a new project has the minimum parameters for the project laid down. For a legacy language like BASIC, one of the standards is to not use GOTO statements because GOTO statements can lead you to loops, loops within loops, and more loops. This produces code difficult to debug and maintain. So when a new programmer codes, he avoids GOTO statements. We will then have an application for our clients which is superior, delivered on time and easy to maintain. Just imagine a new programmer coding hundreds of GOTO statements and then someone tells the whiz kid, "Hey, we don't use GOTOs here. Can you remove them?"

If there was a standard that all the year were coded with YYYY, instead of just YY, we would not have the Y2K or year 2000 problem which is

afflicting so many systems. But standards cannot be ahead of technology! Programmers were using 16-bit systems with 640 KB RAM and handling YY was an achievement!

At JMT, Microsoft Outlook is our standard for Office productivity. When everyone uses Microsoft Outlook, meetings can be scheduled easily. Everyone can also use features like Calendar, Tasks, Notes, Journal, Mail, etc. to manage their activities well. However, if each one of us used different Mail clients and different meeting organizers there would be chaos. ICQ is our standard for quick Internet communication between associates in Guam and the rest of the world. ICQ helps everyone remain in touch quickly and efficiently. Instant Team Room will be our standard for communicating with our clients. All these standards are being laid down and will be formally adopted.

While laying down the standard is important and helps, it is the practice of these standards which is important. Driving on the right side of the road is a standard in America. In India, we drive on the left side. The motor vehicle rules in each country ensure that everyone drives on the correct side. Quality, rules, and discipline are difficult to implement. However, easy availability of the standard and a healthy respect for it will go a long way in delivering quality results.

One of the best examples of adhering to standards is the McDonald's Burger. It is served the same in USA, China, Hong Kong, India and Guam. They have standards which say what will be the size of the patty, how long it will be cooked, what fat will be used, and so on. Consistent quality is what the customer gets each time.

Software is a different. It is tough to meet client requirements in terms of time, resources, money and Quality. Developers want cutting-edge technology; clients cannot budget for it! But both want Quality. Our principals, Jerry Torres and Joe Varella, are recognized for pioneering the Quality Program at the University of Guam. We have a good start there!

If there were no standards, life would be unsafe and unbearable. Think! Drinking water? Computer Monitor radiation hazards? Microwave? Car Safety? Airlines? The Quality principle is simple: you know it when you see it!

Guru Kamath is a Technical Writer based in India, currently working in Guam.

One of the best examples of adhering to standards is the McDonald's hamburger. It is served the same in USA, China, Hong Kong, India, and Guam.

The Myths of Japanese Quality **by Ray and Cindelyn Eberts**

1995 Prentice Hall: New Jersey 327 pages

Amber Fenner

Ray Eberts emphasizes that often process improvements are made that are paper only and sacrifice the well-being of employees.

“All the best stuff is made in Japan...” (Michael J. Fox to Christopher Lloyd in “Back to the Future III”)

Although Marty McFly had to explain this to “the Doc,” he was stating what appeared to be a self-evident truth in the mid-80s: that Japan produced the best quality cars and electronics. This statement is still generally accepted as truth today. The authors of this book, Ray and Cindelyn Eberts, however, feel that while this statement may have been true at one time, Japanese reality does not currently meet American perceptions of the Japanese image. The authors are an industrial engineering professor at Purdue University and a human factors consultant who both hold advanced degrees in experimental psychology. Their views on Japanese life are based on a stay of about one year during which they lived and worked under the same conditions as Japanese professionals. They emphasize that the book was not written by a couple of tourists on a month-long visit.

Like many Americans, they had mental images of life in Japan. They had heard about and bought Japanese cars and electronics. They had read about the superiority of Japanese management techniques and the Japanese educational system. However, it didn’t take long for them to realize that these mental images were just that...images. And, while the conflict between image and reality was difficult for them (as Americans) to understand, it was something that their Japanese counterparts simply accepted. For Americans image is one thing and reality is another. When a conflict exists between image and reality Americans prefer reality, or concrete experience, to image. The Eberts’, however, discovered that for the Japanese, image was as important, or even more important, than the corresponding reality. This emphasis on image is a vital part of Japanese culture and this book discusses how that culture affects the image and the reality of “Japanese Quality.”

The book is divided into three parts. The first three chapters examine the concept of “quality” by using anecdotes gathered while the couple was living in Japan. The Japanese concept of “tatamae” concerns the relationship of image to reality and is

presented using a metaphor. While Ray was giving a presentation to his Japanese counterparts, he noticed that the overhead projector was woefully out of focus. Another projector could not be located and no amount of adjustment could fix the screen. The “solution” was that one of the members of the audience attached a string to the projector that, when pulled and held, would maintain the projector’s focus. However, Dr. Eberts noticed that the string was only pulled when he turned around to look at the screen. The audience was looking at a blurred screen. Whenever Dr. Eberts would turn to face the audience, the string was released, and whenever he turned toward the screen it was pulled so he would see the picture in focus. The image that was being presented to him, that of a clear screen, was much more important to his audience than the reality that the projector simply did not function. The authors use the projector incident as a metaphor throughout the book to illustrate the difference between image and reality.

Chapters 4 through 7 are a technical discussion of quality and the tools and techniques used to achieve and measure it. The author’s main point throughout these chapters is that Deming’s methods (those adopted by many Japanese companies) do not address customer or employee satisfaction, only numbers, such as: how many process errors were eliminated. Ray Eberts emphasizes that often process improvements are made that are “paper only” and sacrifice the well-being of the employees. He also points out that while a product may be the result of an excellent manufacturing system (in Deming’s terms) it may lack usability features that the product’s user considers essential, but that were not considered by the product’s engineers. In these two examples, high-quality processes do not necessarily result in what an American would consider an overall “quality” product.

The rest of the book, Chapters 8 through 17, address ten specific “myths” of Japanese quality. Four of these myths concern product quality and six are related to the management techniques used in Japanese companies. The authors want we

See “Japanese Quality” on page 9



ISO 9000: 2000; the next evolution

Ralph Robinson, Senior Member, Toronto Chapter

November 2000 will be a landmark date for companies registered to, or currently implementing, ISO 9000. Because that is when the International Organization for Standardization will release the first major revision to this international quality standard. There was a revision released in 1994, but it was more of a fine-tuning of the original 1987 standard than a revision of it.

One of the most noticeable changes in the 2000 edition will be the complete restructuring of the standard itself. Gone is the 20-element structure, replaced by one which is process-based around these major sections:

1. Management Responsibility: Policy, objectives, planning, quality system management, and management review.
2. Resource Management: Human resources, information, and facilities.
3. Process Management: Customer satisfaction, design, purchasing, and production.
4. Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement: Audit, process control, and continual improvement.

The current 20 elements will be clearly identifiable in this new structure, divided among the sections as shown in the list above. This process-based structure is more generic than the current structure. It adopts a process management philosophy that is more widely-used in business today and that is consistent with the Plan-Do-Check-Act

improvement cycle, that has been so successful in the ISO 14000 Environmental Standards.

Another significant change is the merging of the current ISO 9001, ISO 9002, and ISO 9003 standards into a single ISO 9001 standard that incorporates tailoring to omit requirements that are not applicable to an organization. Also at this time, the major guideline document, ISO 9004, will be reformatted to match the new ISO 9001 standard on a clause-by-clause basis, thereby developing a consistent pair of standards.

While significant work has already been done on this revision, it is still in the Committee Draft (CD) stage. CD #1 is currently on review with comments being added by national standards bodies. The CD #1's revision completion and CD #2's release are expected during spring 1999. CD #2's review cycle is expected to be complete by late summer 1999. Any major concerns from this review will be incorporated in the Draft International Standard (DIS) that is to be circulated in early year 2000. Voting on this draft to be completed by mid-year 2000 and the final release is scheduled for November 2000.

Watch *DocQment* for future updates on the progress of this very important revision process.

Ralph Robinson is author of the book "Documenting ISO 9000: Guidelines for Compliant Documentation" available through R2 Innovations in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

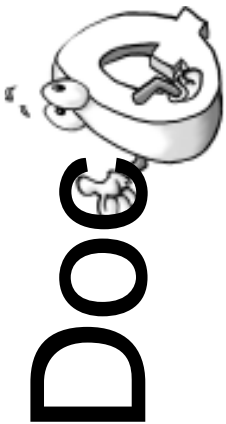
Another significant change is the merging of the current ISO 9001, ISO 9002, and ISO 9003 standards into a single ISO 9001 standard.

Japanese Quality, from page 8

American readers to realize that the image we have of Japanese education, workers, products, and management techniques do not necessarily reflect the reality of Japanese life. In most cases the reality is much worse. The authors share their experiences of faulty Japanese products; tell us about Japanese workers who sleep at their desks because the image that they work for long hours is more important than the reality of what they are actually doing while they are there, and relate what they learned about the reality of the Japanese education system.

The book is filled with anecdotal information that as a consumer, I found extremely interesting. However, the discussion of what the Japanese weren't doing with respect to quality is of little use because the authors assume that the very nature of Japanese culture makes improvements or solutions unlikely. Consequently, I wouldn't recommend the book be used as a "tool" for quality professionals in the same way as other "lessons learned" books can be. The book is most useful as a paradigm shifter. The Japanese, according to the authors, spend a great deal of time, money, and effort creating an image to be presented to the public. After reading the book you will become more aware of these efforts, and are more likely to seek the reality behind the image.

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