Will Total Quality Management work for you?—Part 3

By John A. Ross

In Business Corner, for the past two months we have been looking at the management theory called Total Quality Management. As Deming's Point 1 shows, an organization that maintains a consistent commitment to purpose has a better chance of achieving success The second point in Total Quality Management requires that the organization adopt the new philosophy and management must awaken to the challenge, learn their responsi-

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bilities, and take on leadership for change In this installment, we'll talk about point 3.

TQM Point 3

The third TQM point is *cease reliance on mass inspection to achieve quality Eliminate the need for inspection on a mass basis by building quality into the product in the first place Build quality into the product from the start*

Of all the TQM points, point three may be the easiest to achieve. As we service televisions, VCR's or computers, we can apply quality from the beginning to the

end of the service process. The difference between an excellent job and a poor job is often only a few minutes—and return business or referrals through satisfied customers. Indeed, the few minutes required to do an excellent job often eliminate the necessity for re-doing the job.

Building quality into service also means, if possible, completing the job the first time. Understandably, the need for additional parts or other circumstances may prevent "first-time" job completion. Many of us have the best intentions when we putt off the completion of a job until

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Microcomputer Services Quality First Checklist

Date_____ Office_____ User_____

Operating and Applications Software

1) Autoexec bat_____
Path _____ Prompt _____ Screen saver _____ Windows Mode _____
2) Config sys _____
Buffers _____ Files _____ Device Drivers _____
Memory Manager _____ Smart.drv _____ Ramdrive _____
3) Menu Access _____ 4) Windows Access _____ 5) Data Path _____
6) Color _____ 7) Graphics Driver(s) _____ 8) User Changes _____
9) Printer Driver(s) _____ 10) Icons _____ 11) Manual
12) Error Messages _____ -------- _____

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System Hardware

Hard Drive	Floppy Drive	Memory
1) BIOS compatibility_____	1) Disk Read_____	1) Read/Write _____
2) Norton Disk Doctor _____	2) Disk Setup _____	2) Parity_____
3) Cables_____	3) Cables _____	**Printer**
4) Fasteners_____	4) Fasteners _____	1) Feed_____
5) DOS _____	5) Format _____	2) Quality _____
6) Applications _____	**BIOS**	3) Prt Screen _____
7) Boot _____	1) Configuration_____	4) Software _____

I have performed the above tests while installing _____ If you require further assistance, please call me at 4021.
Microcomputer Services Signature _____

Figure 1. The checklist establishes a routine for service personnel

the next day. Unfortunately, we may not make it back because of other work or simply because going back is inconvenient. For your customers, the fact that you or your employees did not return affects their opinion of your business. Above all, if you or your employees cannot return to a customer site for some reason, explain the reasons for the delay to the customer.

Establish routines

Building quality into the repair process can be accomplished by establishing routines. When you or your employees begin a repair task, start the task by writing a repair checklist. Other service calls, the need for parts, or visitors often interrupt the progress of a repair. A checklist can work as a device for recording your progress on a given job through every one of its stages. At the end of the repair, provide a copy of the checklist for your customer. The checklist assures the customer that you have taken a formal, sequential approach to the repair and establishes a repair record for each item

Total Quality Management has become a mission at our university. To achieve TQM at the service level, the Microcomputer Services office implemented a scheduling system, customer contacts, and a Quality First checklist. Even though the university office only provides services for other university staff and faculty, some of their initiatives may work as models for your service operation

Handling customer contacts

Customer contacts to the office are made through phone messages and electronic mail. In all cases, the office staff translates the contact into a written, numbered work order which becomes the first stage of the process. With the work order in hand, the office manager places the task into the office work schedule and assigns it to a particular staff member After scheduling the task, the manager informs the customer about the scheduled day and time, the assignment of the task to the staff member, and explains that all times are tentative. The last, qualifying statement accounts for unforeseen delays that are a part of the service business.

All this accomplishes several things.

Translating the customer's call into a written work order creates a paper trail for the manager and the staff member. After completing the task, staff members ask the customer to sign the work order. For the manager, staff member, and, most important, the customer, this signifies the completion of the work order.

Placing the task into the office work schedule allows the manager and staff to see the progress for the day. For the customer, the scheduling illustrates an organized effort by the office staff As expected, though, the daily schedule is disrupted by jobs that take longer than anticipated. In that event, the manager calls the customers and reschedules the repair

Using a checklist

As mentioned, the office also implemented a "Quality First" checklist. The checklist, Figure 1, establishes a routine for service personnel. Although this checklist is tailored for computer service, something like it might be useful for any service facility. Often, difficult-to-diagnose problems seem to send service personnel in circles. When it's used during the repair process, the checklist allows service personnel to keep track of their activities For the customer, it also provides a sense of organization and process.

Aside from building quality into the service process from the start, the moves made by the Microcomputer Services office at this university also have enhanced communication with their customers. Time-consuming return calls have nearly been eliminated. Customers have become more aware of the workload encountered by the service personnel and more tolerant of necessary delays. As a result, customer complaints have dropped substantially.■