

Quality Leadership

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Introduction

What defines and differentiates leadership in quality management? What is 'Quality Leadership'? The fundamental foundations of Quality, the teachings of the Gurus, are all based on organizational leadership with an ethical core focusing on people, social responsibility and quality of work life.

In 2005 a national study of 1,374 individuals regarding US leadership conducted by the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University, found that “66% of Americans agree that we have a leadership crisis in the country today.” (National Leadership Index, 2005, p10) Business leaders were ranked second lowest in regard to confidence level out of all categories studied. This resulted in the fact that “nearly three quarters of Americans (72%) believe that unless the country’s leaders improve, the United States will decline as a nation.” (National Leadership Index, 2005, p11) This aligns with a study by ASQ in 2006 in which 70% of Americans stated that they did not trust big companies. (ASQ, 2006)

The reports revealed a nation that felt that there was a lack of integrity in leadership and that public confidence in business leadership was low. There was also a desire for strong leadership to fill this void and it was seen as essential for the future of America. Therefore, the topic of leadership is timely and provides the opportunity for quality in regaining public confidence in business and its leadership.

Quality and Leadership

The importance of leadership as an integral part of quality management is well documented. (Saraph, Benson and Schroeder, 1989, Anderson, Rungtusanatham, and Schroeder, 1994, Black and Porter, 1996, Ahire, Golhar and Waller, 1996) “Leadership, which includes management commitment, is contained in virtually every definition of total quality and every prescriptive model on how to achieve it.” (Grandzol and Gershon, 1997, p46) Indeed “any individual or organization that wishes to take their initial steps on their journey toward quality must begin with a near sighted examination of its organization leadership capability and culture.” (Mauro and Mauro, 1999, p37) Feigenbaum stated that “quality today has become the foundation for constant management innovation and leadership” (Feigenbaum, 2007, p38) Deming stated about his book, Out of the Crisis, that “actually, most of this book is involved with leadership.” (Deming, 1986, p248) Juran stated that “attaining quality leadership requires that upper managers personally take charge of the quality initiative.” (Juran et al, 1995, p128). While quality and leadership are closely aligned, what defines quality leadership?

Defining Quality Leadership

Leadership is typically defined by the traits, qualities and behaviors of a leader. What traits reflect quality leadership and which leadership theories are most closely aligned to it. “Both leadership theories and TQM have had as primary objectives the enhanced performance of organizations and increased job satisfaction for employees.” (Puffer and McCarthy, 1996, p109) The key differences in leadership between TQM and traditional organizations are as follows:

- Strategic leadership is more important in TQM organizations because TQM is more likely to emphasize that internal systems be aligned with external environments
- Visionary leadership because the success of TQM depends on employees sharing a common vision or goal
- Designing reward systems for all stakeholders to foster creativity and innovation
- Empowerment and teamwork, timely responses to customer concerns by having all employees take a leadership role as well as share information and expertise.” (Puffer and McCarthy, 1996, p125)

Perhaps the leadership style that most relates to quality leadership, is transformational leadership which “searches for ways to help motivate followers by satisfying high order needs and more fully engaging them in the process of the work.” (Horner, 1997, p275) This is directly “related to quality because transformational leaders are able to communicate and reinforce values and express an inspirational vision focusing on quality. They also encourage quality improvement by building trust and reducing fear, creating awareness for change, developing a culture to support that change and initiating new problem solving strategies.” (Luria, 2008, p31) It is interesting to note that Deming in his book, Out of the Crisis, in chapter 2, which is titled ‘Principles for Transformation,’ stated that “the job of management is not supervision, but leadership.....The required transformation of the western style of management requires that managers be leaders.” (Deming, 1986, p54)

Quality leadership is where quality principles become “a basis for guiding, empowering and supporting the constant pursuit of excellence by the employees throughout the organization.” (Feigenbaum, 2007, p38) In this regard the emphasis is on “creating the power of an environment of trust, openness and honest communication to encourage the development of individual quality improvement entrepreneurs.” (Feigenbaum, 2007, p39) The leader specifically “has the responsibility to improve the system, i.e. to make it possible, on a continuing basis, for everyone to do a better job with greater satisfaction.” (Deming, 1986, p248) This leader “instead of being a judge, will be a colleague, counseling and leading his people on a day to day basis, learning from them and with them.” (Deming, 1986, p117) While these are the principles upon which quality leadership is built, how it is applied means that it is “necessary to apply the entire array of quality know how (the quality disciplines) throughout the entire company to all functions and all levels and to do so in a coordinated way.” (Juran et al, 1995, p128)

This focus on empowerment, throughout the organization and in creating leaders is essential. This participatory approach means that quality “is the responsibility of everyone, not just the quality experts.....the CEO’s role is by no means diminished. Rather, he has the added responsibility of creating the proper environment for planning at lower levels. The cascading process is the key to sharing” (Lee and Gharajedaghi, 1998, p20) This empowerment means that employees are motivated to improve the corporation and trained for improvement work, they feel comfortable in

decision making, and trust exists that the company is dedicated to the development of its employees. For this to be achieved the “leaders must understand what motivates employees.....managing teams is a key leadership function.” (Lee and Gharajedaghi, 1998, p26)

“What we need then are leader based organizations, with leadership capacity embedded throughout the organization.” (Winder and Draeger, 2006, p1) “The most current theory on leadership looks at leadership as a process in which leaders are not seen as individuals in charge of followers, but as members of a community of practice.” (Horner, 1997, p277) In regard to team leadership, iwhat’s important is “sharing knowledge amongst team members, acting as a mentor, instructing others, facilitating group processes, providing information, monitoring performance, promoting open communication, providing goals and allocating resources effectively.” (Horner, 1997, p284)

Individual qualities of a quality leader, “which will be necessary to implement and sustain progress toward a TQM culture include, drive, motivation, honesty and integrity, self confidence, cognitive ability, knowledge of the business, charisma.” (Puffer and McCarthy, 1996, p115) This directly reflects the 95% percent of respondents to the National Leadership Index report, who stated that honesty and integrity were extremely important traits in leaders. (National Leadership Index, 2005) These traits are also reflected in research conducted by Kouzes and Posner who researched characteristics of admired leaders, in six continents, in 3 major studies, 1987, 1995 and 2002. In each of these the top 4 characteristics in each were, honesty, forward looking, competent and inspiring. (Kouzes and Posner, 2002)

Leadership and Baldrige

One of the most successful and most widely used quality criteria is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, Criteria for Performance Excellence. (Leonard, 2006, Baldrige National Quality Program) One of the key categories (category 1) specifically addresses leadership and represents 120 points out of 1000. This category focuses on how senior leaders guide and sustain an organization, communicate and encourage high performance in addition to responsibilities to the public, ethical behavior and good citizenship.

Not only does the criteria include leadership as a category but it underpins the entire criteria as visionary leadership is a core value and concept. These are embedded beliefs and behaviors in high performing organizations. It defines visionary leadership in the following way. “Organization’s senior leaders should set directions and create a customer focus, clear and visible values, and high expectations.....leaders should ensure the creation of strategies, systems and methods for achieving performance excellence, stimulating innovation, building knowledge and capabilities, and ensuring organizational sustainability.....Senior leaders should inspire, motivate, and encourage your entire workforce to contribute, to develop and learn, to be innovative and creative..... should serve as role models through their ethical behavior and their personal involvement in planning, communications, coaching, development of future leaders, review of organizational performance, and employee recognition. As role models they can reinforce ethics, values, and expectations while building leadership, commitment, and initiative throughout your organization.” (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2007, p1)

In the glossary of key terms, Baldrige defines a Leadership System as “an effective leadership system includes mechanisms for the leaders to conduct self-examination, receive feedback and improve.” (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2007, p68)

With the importance of leadership in quality and Baldrige, it is not surprising then that a 2003 study by Baldrige/NIST showed that the second highest reason for the criteria being used was that the CEO or senior leadership made the decision. (NIST/BNQP, 2003, p6) Respondents also stated that the greatest impact on organizational success was leadership commitment and the greatest influence on successful implementation was senior leadership commitment and extensive CEO/senior leadership involvement. (NIST/BNQP, 2003, p14) The difference between those organizations that achieved the desired results compared to those that did not was overwhelmingly leadership. (NIST/BNQP, 2003, p13)

The Baldrige impact on leadership does not end there. A survey of 600 US based organizations known for their excellence in developing leaders, using interviews and site visits the publication Leadership Excellence then ranked the top leadership development programs in the US. In the government/military category the Baldrige Award ranked 8th after West Point and US Army Rangers. “These programs appear to deliver the best return on investment.....participants come in with clear expectations and come away with concrete applications and accountability for results.” (Leadership Excellence, 2006, p2) The criteria included in the study were vision, mission, involvement participation, accountability measurement, content curriculum, presenters presentations, take home value results for customers, outreach of the programs and products.

Conclusions

Those following the teachings of quality gurus such as Deming, Juran and Feigenbaum and implementing quality culture, tools and techniques are following approaches that tend toward leadership traits that include, empowerment, a focus on people, vision, a strategic viewpoint, and integration of disciplines. Other traits include strong integrity and an awareness of social responsibilities. This particular quality leadership style is one that is being called for as research shows a frustration at poor leadership. Empirical research needs to be carried out to further study the characteristics of quality leadership and its impact on organization and differentiation from other styles of leadership.

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