

Case of study of executive holloware



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INTRODUCTION:

This document contains the case of study of Executive Holloware (EH), a company that manufactures products that aimed at the top end of market with a commanded high price. The most important product was the handmade silver-plated tea sets.

In the following pages, a definition and specification of quality is presented and why it is important for the company. It is also mention the main causes of the problems in the case of study, the measure of quality in the stages during the manufacturing process and finally the recommendations of steps for implementing quality improvements.

1. Why is quality important to Executive Holloware?

The term Quality is the core business for Executive Holloware, because this company produces high value products at the top end of market and commanded high prices. The most important product was the handmade, silver plated Georgian tea sets, hence the relevance of developing a product in the required and approved conditions that satisfy the high expectations of the customer.

Because the company in 2002 had become one of the leading UK Holloware suppliers, quality is related to the final product and the acceptance of the customer to the new products.

The concept of quality is also important for the organization because they produced different cutlery and tableware items and decided to specialise in the production of the tea sets; hence, the relevance of considering quality in the new methods, the raw material, the internal process, and the final

products to face the competitive edge and increase the profitability of the organization.

Quality is important because the company lost around £12, 000 each month in re-working and customer returns, therefore the relevance to achieve a standardized process and to avoid defects in the product.

2.- What do you understand by the term “ quality”?

The term “ quality” has been updated year after year because of the different ideas, philosophies and methods that have emerged (Maguad, 2006). In order to understand better the term quality, it is necessary to consider the customer point of view and the process involved. First, quality can be defined as “ meeting the customer requirements”, but there is another stage of satisfying the customers such as delighting them, which allows the companies to measure customer loyalty and the total satisfaction of the products developed. (Oakland, 2003)

Second, the term quality also refers to the reliability of the product. Because of the standardization and high-performance practices, quality depends on how well the organization performs through the process to develop a product and the ability of it to continue meeting the customer expectations. (Maguad, 2006)

The concept of quality is related not only in the product, but also in the entire processes in an organization, hence the necessity to define a specification in production. This allows developing a product with the standard requirements with a detail description of components, parameters,

raw material used and inspection process and evaluation control. (Drew, 2006)

3.- How would you specify “ quality” for Executive Holloware?

The term quality for Executive Holloware can be specified mainly on the high value silver products in the market. These products need to be without any scratches or bruises and also most of the items should leave the factory after the quality inspection to achieve the determined specifications. Because the main product is high value Holloware, EH must define quality with the following characteristics in the process:

1. Reliability.-

Customers expect that the product will last longer than the regular one in the market while purchasing a Holloware item, therefore the product specification and raw material are important regarding to the customer usage no matter the environmental factor. (Oakland, 2003)

2. Aesthetic characteristics.-

Clearly, these products are valuable because of the appearance, hence the relevance of avoiding any defect of each product. This also involves the specification of color, size, and durability. (Oakland, 2003)

Quality is also specified in the internal process. This process needs to be measure and comparable to the acceptable ranges in production to develop a product that fulfil the specifications and it also requires “ the participation from everyone in the organization”. (Maguad, 2006)

4.- What are the underlying causes of the problems at Executive Holloware?

There are some problems presented in the EH case of study. First, the products developed by the company are high value tea sets items, thus the necessity to maintain a standard performance to produce a product without any defect. One cause of the problem is that there is no specific definition of defect in the entire process. It is mentioned that the senior shop foreman does not have a clear understanding of defect definition and this affect the correct performance of the entire process because it represent in re-working cost.

Other cause of problem is that each department does not maintain a close communication about the relevance of the quality in the process. Paul realized that each department blame each other regarding to the scratches and bruises of the product. Even the finance director did not has a clear vision of the situation, therefore the lack of communication and process internal control

In the Organization, there were no specification clearly defined of quality and the metrics of quality acceptance during the process, such as the clear definition of scratch and bruise in the teapots and the acceptable ranges like tolerances or specifications in production. This generates problems in the process and the re-working cost while sending back the items to remove or to correct the defects.

Finally, quality assurance during the process is responsibility of each member in the organization. (Talha, 2004) In this case, the quality department was the only responsible of this task and the other departments

were not able to perform a quality inspection before the product leaves the organization to the market. A clear quality control process will ensure the well performance and development of the high value product for customer expectations. (Talha, 2004)

5.- How should Executive Holloware measure quality at each stage of the process?

Paul can utilize a combination of tools and techniques to measure quality in each stage of the process in order to highlight complex data in a clear visual way, to evaluate the stages that generates most of the problems, to emphasize the areas to be prioritized, to show relationships between the departments, to determine cause of failure and to implement an improvement procedure. (Bamford, 2003)

The measurement techniques of quality in each stage are the following.

* Press Shop.- At this process the Pareto diagram is the tool that organizes the data from the larges to the smallest that requires attention and can be used for measuring at this stage. (Hagemeyer, 2005). This allows to identify the problem in the first place and to avoid sending the defect product to the next stage. A graphical tool, such as scattered diagrams, can be applied in this stage to show the relationship between the factors. (Hagemeyer, 2005).

*** Plating and Softening:**

There are some tools for measuring that can be applied this stage for instance the Check Sheet to collect data, organize and categorize to detect defects and for further analysis; the histograms, to show the frequency with which a value occurs; and Control Charts as a sensitive tool used by the staff to prevent errors or defects. (Hagemeyer, 2005).

*** Assembly.-**

At this stage, Paul should measure quality by the Statistical Process Control Chart, which monitor and predicts the performance of the process; the process flow diagram to show a graphic illustration of the actual process to avoid mistakes. (Hagemeyer, 2005) Finally, the Gage repeatability and reproducibility tool can be applied to determine the amount of variation in the measurement system and the sources of the variation. (William, 2005)

*** Polishing.-**

In the investigation made by Paul, it was showed that the polishing and buffing department got the mayor number of complains because of the scratches and bruises. Therefore, the quality techniques and tools that can be applied in this stage for measurement are Cause and Effect Diagram to identify the sub-causes of the main problem; The Statistical Quality Control to monitor the production process by taking samples of the products and plot the data in control charts. (Hagemeyer, 2005).

6.- What steps would you advise Paul Stone to take to improve quality?

The Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA) cycle is a suitable technique for monitoring and problem solving for continuous quality improvement and the steps are the following:

1. Plan.- In this step, Paul needs to identify the problem with the quality tools like brainstorming, Pareto charts, employees inputs, why-why diagrams; analyze the problems and set objectives (check sheets, scatter diagrams, control charts, cause and defect diagrams); determine performance measurements; and explore alternative solutions. (Ahmed, 2002)

2. Do.- This includes planning and execute the solutions defined. The action plan is required with the people involved in the implementation and the responsibilities of each one; therefore the internal communication and commitment in the organization is crucial. (Oakland, 2003)

3. Check- In this step, Paul will be able to evaluate the performance with different tools such as control charts, check sheets, histograms, Pareto charts, etc.) (Ahmed, 2002).

4. Act.- This includes further improvement and standardized solutions in the organization. (Ahmed, 2002)

Paul needs to consider that a quality improvement program should be employed as a strategic improvement initiative, rather than a performance enhancing tool or techniques; and it has to be integrated with “ organizational strategy and operations to succeed”. (Asif, 2009).

In addition to the steps mentioned above, a quality improvement implementation must consider the commitment and involvement of all the parties in the process, an open communication, continuous improvement, internal and external customer focus, a partnership with suppliers, and monitoring and evaluating procedures of quality. (Mohammad, 2006).

Conclusions

Quality is an important concept in the performance of any organization. A definition of the term “ Quality” has been updated because of the organization procedures, environmental changes and customer expectations. (Maguad, 2006). In this document the term quality was defined and also it

was showed the importance of it for Executive Holloware. The causes of the problems in the case study were presented, and the recommendation of how the company should measure quality in each stage of the process.

Finally, it is included the steps for implementation a quality improvement in the organization in order to face the customer requirements and to perform as a competitive organization in the Holloware industry.

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