

## Quality Continuous Improvement Events – How and What.

In my article, last week, I looked at 'Why' Quality Continuous Improvement Events (QCIE) are so important – especially after the disruption caused by the COVID Crisis.

This week I am looking at how QCIEs are conducted and what needs to be included in such an event.

In the first instance there is a need to look at the goals that have been set for each team within the organisation. Are they still relevant? Do they still add value to the end customer? Where there is a need to change the goals to be achieved – the QCIE process will differ slightly from a position where the goals have not changed. I will look at this later. In the mean-time I will outline the QCIE process where the goals have remained unchanged.

The actions that are performed in achieving team goals make up a significant part of the Value Chain. It is therefore important that all team members are brought together to ascertain the actual actions that are being undertaken (not those that people think should be taken – that can be looked at later in the process). These should be mapped out and, where there are anomalies (such as inconsistencies in the actions being taken by team members) all the actions being undertaken should be included and a note made, of both the actions and the context in which they have been taken, so that they can be reviewed once the mapping has been completed and the correct actions identified. Where actions are missing, these can also be identified and noted, together with any actions that are deemed to be obsolete. Note: Where there are anomalies, there is a need to gain an understanding of why this is the case. Does it suggest poor capability within the team? Has there been implicit learning that has not been communicated by team members? What is the cause? Mapping will need to be completed for each individual goal that has been set for the team. However, this is only part of the process. What about the communication and collaboration that supports the Value Chain?

Internal and external interactions (communication/collaboration) required to support the actions should also be mapped out – showing at what stage the interactions occur as against the actions being undertaken. Where lines of communication/collaboration are found to be missing these should also be noted so that action can be taken to ensure that they are reinstated. This should include lines of communication between team members where remote/hybrid working has become the norm. Poor communication at this level is likely to result in a loss of implicit learning (unstructured learning normally gained in the workplace) – leading to poor development - stifling growth for both the both the employee and the organisation. As previously mentioned, where the goals, to be achieved by the team, need to be changed the QCIE process will differ slightly – although mapping still needs to be undertaken.

Where there is a need to change the goals to be achieved by a team, the actions perceived to be necessary to achieve them will need to be thought out and then mapped out. In order to ensure that there is engagement with such change, all team members should be included and ideas submitted by them should be taken into account. Once it has been determined that the right actions have been identified and mapped out, the internal and external

interaction required to support them will also need to be mapped out (in the same way as previously outlined). Now we come to the fun part. What affect will changes have on other teams across the organisation? Do the existing internal lines of communication/collaboration align with those of other teams?

A meeting of team leaders is required in order to ensure that everyone is aware of any changes that may have been identified by the QCIE process, so as to ensure that any further changes required by other teams can be made. There is also a need to ensure that the lines of communication and collaboration are aligned across the organisation. By so doing, they will support the Value Chain as a whole. Having completed this procedure there is a need to look at external communication and collaboration as well as looking at how any internal changes might have an effect on suppliers and customers.

At this stage suppliers can be invited to send a representative to look at the Value Chain and, in particular, pick up on any changes required to the Supply Chain and/or external communication links. Having regular customers come in to look at the Value Chain (working back from the Customer) can also be of benefit when looking at changes that might affect them and in determining the best way to communicate with them. Including potential customers might also be beneficial – perhaps their inclusion can add value to the process? What I haven't talked about is the Senior Management Team.

It is important that the Senior Management Team is involved from the start and provide leadership throughout the QCIE process across the whole organisation. This ensures that strategies remain operable – especially where it is felt that changes are needed to actions and/or lines of communication and collaboration. They also need to be aware of any additional cost or savings are incurred through change and that the 'right' culture is being leveraged to ensure that innovation and creativity can be utilised to aid growth.

I hope that you will have found this of interest and, hopefully, of value.