



# Four Views into the Looking Glass of Quality

by Len Zimmerman, ZBC, Inc.

Once had a client who could not pass a mirror without looking at herself. In fact, there was not a mirror that she did not love—or that did not love her. At first I made jokes, yet soon I realized that her behavior was not vanity or to impress others, but a conscious desire to look the best that she could ... for herself and for those around her. When she looked good, she felt good, which in turn made others feel good. It was in her nature and her character and was reflected in her products, her services, her business ethics, her corporate literature and her manner in dealing with people. She had a keen sense of *Quality* and her views of quality were manifested throughout every aspect of her business. It is no exaggeration to say that her business became very, very successful.

Quality is the most important factor affecting the imaging products aftermarket and remanufacturing industry today. Fairly or not, our industry is judged by—and is sensitive to—the quality of our manufactured goods. Thus, we strive to produce products of the highest quality by using quality components. We implement mechanisms for quality control, and then manage this quality as expertly as we can. The results have been quite positive. Yet, as quality is often viewed and defined in manufacturing terms alone, we may be missing other key areas of quality in which our businesses can improve.

## Four Views of Quality

Quality is the *overall being* of a company. Quality is determined by how a business manufactures and markets its products, manages its employees and resources, presents itself to the industry and public, and effectively and efficiently serves its customers. Quality is a total product management system and customer solution.

Here are four views of quality a business can use to create its own Total Quality Solution:

### Quality in Product Manufacturing and Performance

This is the traditional view of quality. Is your company producing the best quality product that it can? Are the products equal to or above OEM industry standards? How often are they tested for performance? Are quality controls up to date? How efficient are the company's operations? Will your customers repurchase your products?

Below are some points to consider that can improve product manufacturing and performance:

- *Quality Components.* Is your company using the best components available?

- *Quality Suppliers.* Is there respect and honor between your company and its suppliers?
- *Quality Alliances.* Is your company allied with the best partners for the growth of your business?
- *Quality Sourcing.* Is your company open to new ideas?
- *Quality Testing.* Which products are tested and how often?
- *Quality Industry Certifications.* Do your products meet certification standards?
- *Quality Defect Reports.* Are product defects reported and corrected?
- *Quality Warehouse.* How clean and safe is your company's manufacturing facility and warehouse?
- *Quality Operations.* How efficient are the company's operations?
- *Quality Control Procedures.* How often are quality control procedures reviewed?

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**Quality in Customer Service**

How does your company respond to a customer's problem, complaint or compliment? Many companies hire "mystery shoppers" to obtain this type of feedback. Monitoring customer service can be as simple as listening to the way your staff speaks to customers on the phone. Why not call to test your own customer service representatives? Also, ask your customers their opinions. Seek customer comments on your website. Good news or bad, everyone wants to be heard.

Here are a few questions to consider that can improve the quality of your company's service to customers:

- *Quality Attitude.* How are your customers treated when they call?
- *Quality Approach.* Does the staff assume that the customer's concern is valid?

- *Quality Listening.* Does the staff listen and avoid talking over the customer?
- *Quality Timeliness.* Is the customer's concern handled in a timely manner?
- *Quality Accuracy.* Did the staff get a thorough picture of the situation?
- *Quality Solution.* Was the problem solved?
- *Quality Feedback.* Did the customer receive a "thank you"?

**Quality in Presentation**

It is important for your company to see itself as others do. Is the sales message consistent? Do your company's employees clearly understand what the company does and can they communicate it to others? How well do the employees represent your company? How clean is the office working environment?

Mull over these factors that determine the quality of your company's presentation and determine where it stands on each issue:

- *Quality Company Image.* How is your company viewed by customers and its competition?
- *Quality Product Packaging.* Is the packaging well made, and does it clearly communicate about the product?
- *Quality Advertising.* Is your company's strategic and visual message consistent?
- *Quality Message.* Is the message truthful, easily understood and supportable?

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- *Quality Personnel.* Are employees polite and able to speak, write and spell properly?
- *Quality Dress.* Does your company have a dress code, and are employees properly dressed?
- *Quality Manners.* How are the employees' social skills when relating to others?
- *Quality Working Environment.* What are your company's smoking and cell phone policies?
- *Quality Employee Management.* How pleasant is it for your employees to work for your company?
- *Quality Sales Image.* How well do your sales representatives represent your company?



a step back and look into itself on occasion. Although Quality is difficult to define exactly, it is easy to sense and see when something is *not quality*. And always remember that lack of quality can kill a good customer relationship.

Do not become complacent about quality. In your company's products, services, behavior and attitude towards customers, the characteristics of quality will always reflect on your business and on you. With good products, clear presentation, a positive attitude and by always keeping the customer in mind, your business will only continue to grow. ❄

**Quality in Attitude**

A quality attitude is demonstrated by how one does business with customers and how one deals with employees in doing business. The client described in the beginning of the article was quite professional with smart business sense, yet her attitude in dealing with people, more than any other factor, is what made her business successful. She approached managing her business with an optimistic point of view.

Let some of her business traits rub off on you:

- *Quality Appearance.* Are you a good role model for employees?
- *Quality Viewpoint.* Are you a positive influence? How often do you smile?
- *Quality Management.* Do you leave your personal problems at home?
- *Quality Message.* Is your direction to employees clear and unambiguous?
- *Quality Time.* Do you respect employees' need for personal time?
- *Quality Counseling.* How available are you to counsel employees?
- *Quality Performance.* How often do you praise employees, and how do you reward them for good performance?

**Quality, Your Competitive Advantage**

Quality is the key ingredient that will distinguish your business from its competitors. It is reflected by how you view and manage your business and how others view it. Every business needs to take

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