



Involvement of people in Quality Management

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People are always the toughest resource to manage and control. Their involvement is vital for delivering products and services to customer satisfaction, therefore key to the implementation of a quality management system. Human factors influence the design of a quality management system, creating value for the organization and helping to achieve its business objectives.

Process and technology are generally well addressed in technical standards but people are often considered the primary responsibility of a human resources function. This article provides guidelines to create the competence and effective involvement of people to strengthen continual improvement in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of business operations and enhancing customer satisfaction.

Management of people involvement and competence

The basic human factors in a quality management system (clause 5 of ISO 9001, 2008) indicate the importance of people involvement and the need for necessary competence. In order to continually improve their effectiveness, organization should establish, document, implement and maintain processes for competence acquisition and

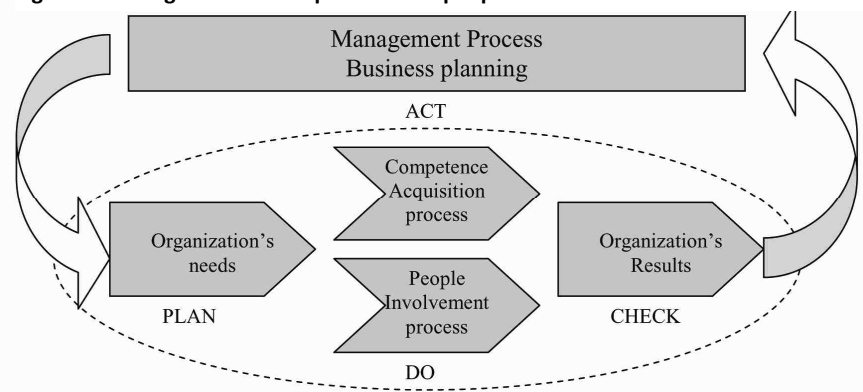
people involvement. Figure 1 below provides us with such a model based on Deming's (1986) Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. It depicts how the "Organization's needs" and "Organization's results" are involved in the business planning process. Competence management and people involvement are shown as support processes and an integral part of the overall management system.

The **competence acquisition process** aims at ensuring the appropriate competence is developed with regard to the needs of the business activities.

This involves managing, developing and maintaining the organization's overall competence, in order to develop the short- and long-term business performance.

A planned and systematic competence acquisition process is of vital importance for the improvement of the organization's ability to achieve its objectives. This process should create the necessary conditions for participation and involvement by the employees in the process. The people involvement process should be applicable to all organizations, regardless of type of

Figure 1: Management of competence and people involvement



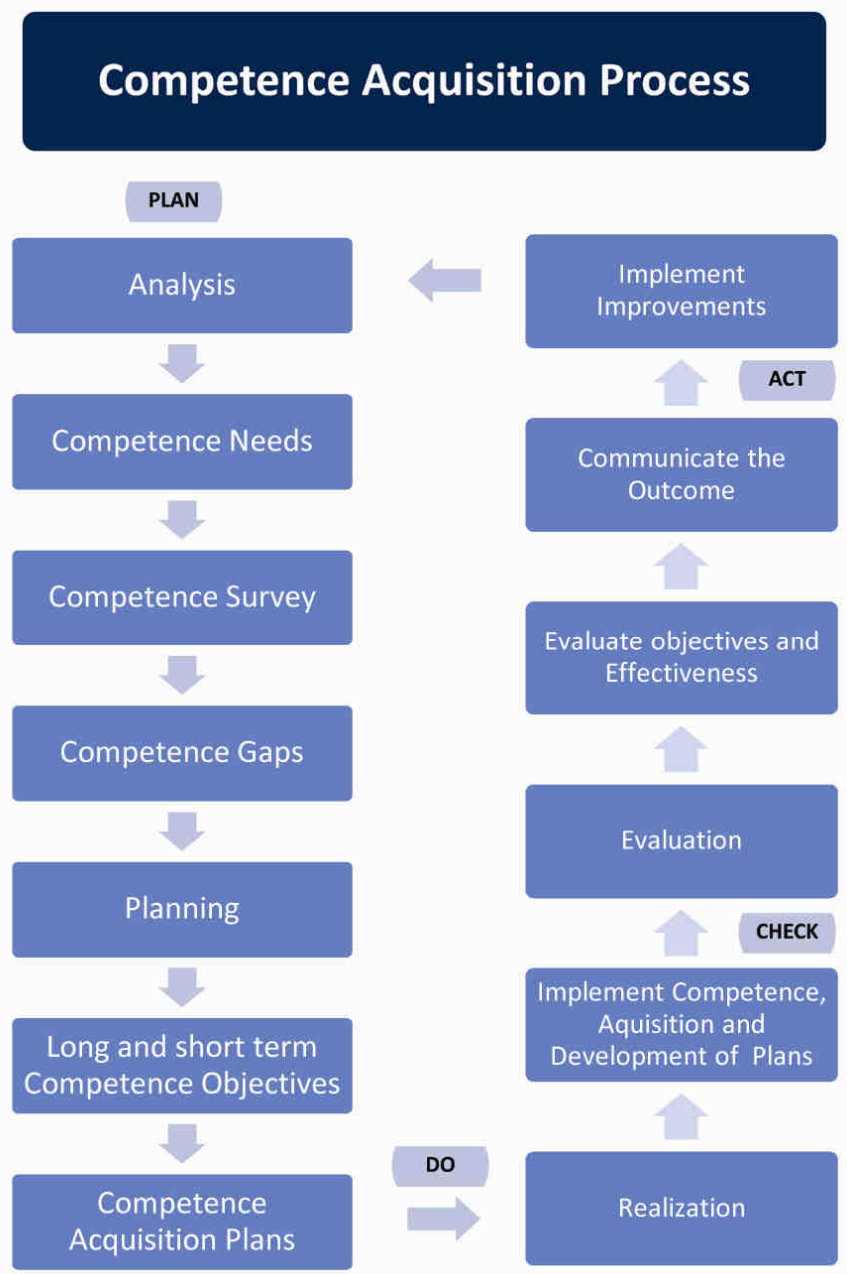
business, size, the product provided or its management systems. The processes employed by organizations for the involvement of people are key to the success of their management systems. The following provides guidelines for managing the people involvement activities.

Managing the competence acquisition process

The business planning function of the organization, strategic as well as operational, constitutes the basis for competence acquisition activities. A well operating competence acquisition process (see Figure 2) will be a competitive advantage when recruiting new employees. Furthermore, it is a prerequisite for the employees in the organization to get the proper competence development. This improves the effectiveness of the organization. At the same time the satisfaction of the employees improves, their opportunities to select jobs increase and their value in the labour market increases.

To this end, top management needs to create the necessary conditions for each employee to understand the importance of the organization's objectives and be capable of contributing to the achievement these objectives. Furthermore, top management should ensure that the organization is informed of the importance of fulfilling statutory and regulatory requirements as well as requirements of interested parties as it pertains to the competence of the organization's people.

Figure 2 - Competence Acquisition Process



Analysis

The competence acquisition process commences with an analysis of competence needs by using inputs such as business plans, policy and guidelines from interested parties. The information is analyzed in order to identify short- and long-term competence needs.

A competence survey should be conducted using manpower plans

and records from previous competence development activities. The existing competence for each employee is thereby mapped out and this creates the knowledge of existing competence and a record of existing competence for the organization. Competence gaps are then identified from competence needs and records of existing competence. Those identified competence gaps should

then be recorded as an input to the next stage.

Planning

Short and long term competence objectives are planned using business plans and the identified gaps. The objectives should be agreed upon in the organization and recorded. Competence acquisition plans are now created and recorded using policy and objectives on competence and with knowledge of the gaps. These plans contain all activities except competence development for existing employees and should include responsibilities and time schedules for the required acquisition. A competence development plan is created and recorded for each employee and proper consideration for the individual ambition and desires should be captured.

Realization

Established competence acquisition and development plans are executed and the activities and results are recorded. Activities in an acquisition plan for the organization could be education and training, recruitment, partnership, outsourcing, consultants. For the individual a development plan could be education and training, on-the-job training, networking, teamwork, etc.

Evaluation

The competence acquisition activities carried out are analyzed and evaluated using records of the accomplished activities. The extent to which objectives are achieved and the impact on effectiveness

and business are recorded as well as an update of individual competence records. The outcome of the evaluation is recorded and provided as feedback information to the organization. Using the record of the outcome of the evaluation and other available information, improvements can be initiated and carried out. A record of any corrective and preventive action is to be maintained.

Management of people involvement

In order to ensure management system effectiveness, top management must make effective choices about who they involve in organizational processes and they are to be involved. Leaders should influence peoples' behaviour in order to motivate them to achieve desired levels of performance.

Whether it be an individual or group, the right involvement can help generate ideas, form consensus, and smooth the way for implementing action plans. When used in combination with problem solving, decision making, and project management processes, effective people involvement is a powerful tool for effecting change and continual improvement.

In achieving these aims an organization's management must decide which is the most appropriate behaviour for the outcome that is expected - choosing from behaviours that range from autocratic to consultative to participative, depending on a given situation. Therefore in order to effectively involve people, a systematic

approach is required. The following are some practical recommendations:

The people involvement process

- Be clear about what you want to achieve (identify personal or group objectives);
- Plan the activity;
- Identify who needs to be involved, not who will be easy to involve;
- Remember to reflect on the diversity of the target group(s);
- Be clear about the role(s) of those that you will involve;
- Advertise and recruit on that basis;
- Select people according to agreed criteria (not your prejudices);
- Be clear about the task and the process;
- Effectively communicate what is to be accomplished and your expectations to the people that want to be involved;
- Be clear with regard to the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms and reporting responsibilities;
- Evaluate the outcomes and provide feedback.

Management commitment

Top management fulfil their leadership role more effectively by;

- Understanding of how their management system relates to the financial management system through the common activity of measurement;
- Each member of the leadership team being given

responsibility for implementation of specific requirements of the organisational system;

- Objectives (operational, financial, marketing, etc.) are set for the leadership team and then being deployed through the organization;
- Understanding the 'bolts and nuts' of their organizational operations;
- Explaining to the people in the organization the value created by the management system by means of success stories.

Top management also needs to develop their leadership competences. This can be achieved by using the right communication techniques and the engaging the right people in settling business objectives whilst

providing the right coaching and guidance. Often one finds that organizations keep employees in a well defined area where they have proven capability and operate effectively. There is a reluctance to move people to a place where they are not necessarily fully competent. This leads people to do the same job for a long time and they may get in a rut or may become happy in a comfort zone.

Exploration is often the victim of 'good time management'. The focus on process efficiency in operations has extended to all aspects of business life. Archimedes moment of 'Eureka' was when he was having a bath. The best ideas will come when they are allowed to emerge instead of forcing them. There must be time to 'bathe and relax'! Hence, the final remarks are: allow

teams, to step out of the box and explore; consider 'retreats' for leadership teams. Everyone must step out of the box. New experiences broaden perspectives. They also enable new opportunities to be seen. Allow time to step back from experiences.

References

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