

A Quality Nation

Having a reputation for quality is a distinct competitive advantage. Japan proved that to the world. Price is not the driving factor today. People pay more money for products and services that are perceived to have higher quality. Sony, Mercedes Benz, and IBM have proven that to us. Organizations that provide high quality gain market share at the sacrifice of their competitors. Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler prove that point as their market share has plummeted. Countries that have a reputation for having organizations that provide high quality are in all cases more successful, provide higher standards of living, have fewer people in the poverty range, have higher capacities, and are more admired than other nations. Germany, U.S., Singapore, and Japan are examples of this phenomenon.

If a country wants to improve the standard of living and the quality of life for its people, it becomes obvious that it can best accomplish this by improving the nation's reputation for providing high-quality products and services. It has become obvious that the "haves" have quality and the "have-nots" do not.

Of all the nations in the world, I know of only three that have tried to take advantage of this reality - Japan, Singapore, and Trinidad. Japanese government set about to change Japan's quality reputation after World War II. It formed organizations like the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) to lead the movement. The results are legendary.

Singapore observed Japan's success and its government set aggressive quality of life and product objectives. Organizations like the Singapore Productivity Center were formed. The government set aside money to offset the additional costs incurred by organizations to train their people and make the required transformation. Again the results were superb.

The third example was Trinidad, a small island nation in the Caribbean. In 1999 the country realized that improved quality was the key to poverty reduction. The nation's pride had a big shot in the arm when one of its young ladies was crowned "Miss Universe". They studied what Singapore was doing and its culture. As a result of this study, they could see no reason why their country could not perform as well as Singapore. This drove them to establish Singapore as their

benchmark and they undertook a nation-wide quality initiative called “Trinidad – A Quality Nation”. The basic objective was to accomplish within a ten-year period what took Singapore thirty years to accomplish. This initiative was financed 60% by industry and 40% by the government. A national foundation was established to lead the initiative and a strategic plan was developed that took into account all of the stakeholders’ viewpoints. This plan included everything from upgrading all levels of education to improving the shipping port and airports. It included all branches of city, county, and national government as well as tourism, all the manufacturing industries, and service industries.

The concept of a Quality Nation is a very advanced approach to bringing about massive improvements in the quality of life and increasing the country’s capacity. It has a bigger potential than any other capacity-improvement initiative. Africa provides an excellent example of how massive amounts of grant money can be expended to increase the continent’s capacity without having a positive impact upon the people’s quality of life. In fact, over the last ten years the poverty level has worsened.

I have recently had conversations with government officials in China and they are looking at applying this concept to an individual city like Shanghai and truly, it will work effectively at the major-city level. We see cities that are called the “Industrial City”, “The City of Brotherly Love”, “Silicon Valley”, and “The Windy City”. Why shouldn’t Shanghai be called “China’s Quality City”. Just think what impact it would have on selling its products if Shanghai became known as the quality-model city within China.

The model for making this major transformation started in Japan. It was refined by Singapore and further developed in Trinidad. The results are a model that can be applied at the national, state, or city level.

The seven keys to the transformation process are:

1. The desire/buy-in
2. Getting all political parties and industries involved

3. Developing a strategic plan
4. Financing the plan
5. Forming the pivotal organization
6. Promoting the concept
7. Implementing the strategy
8. Follow-through to insure results

Although all eight points are critical, I will only discuss the strategic planning as it sets the stage for everything that follows. There are many things that need to be considered when preparing the strategic plan. Some of them are:

- ◆ Who are the stakeholders that will be impacted and what is their vision of a Quality Nation?
- ◆ What is the present view of each stakeholder related the quality of the nation?
- ◆ What would be required for each stakeholder to view the nation as a Quality Nation?
- ◆ What influences their perception?
- ◆ What tools can be used to make the changes?
- ◆ What needs to be done during the first six months to get commitment?
- ◆ What needs to be done during the first twelve months to show visible improvements?
- ◆ How will improvements be measured?
- ◆ How do you organize to insure success?
- ◆ What are the roadblocks?
- ◆ How will the activity be funded?
- ◆ What will be the makeup of the governing board?
- ◆ How do we keep changes in the government party from affecting the program?
- ◆ What will be the benchmark?
- ◆ What grant money is available?
- ◆ How are we going to keep the many different activities coordinated, scheduled, and cost effective?
- ◆ Who will provide the methodologies?
- ◆ Etc.

As you can see the strategic plan is very important, as it must take many things into consideration. As complex as it is, letting its preparation drag out is a fatal mistake. Based upon my experience with Trinidad, the strategic part of the process should be completed within 30 days. Sometimes this will take longer if the individuals involved in developing the strategic plan are not familiar with the improvement tools. In my book, *War on Waste (WOW)*, I list over 1000 different improvement tools. When you consider building the country's infrastructure, you will add additional 250 tools.

The following is a typical activity that the one-week strategic plan section would cover.

Topic

- ◆ Outline of the week's activities
- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Quality Nations and why they are Quality Nations
- ◆ Key concepts that apply to the nation
- ◆ What we want to accomplish
- ◆ Prioritized list of "Quality Nation" stakeholders
- ◆ 20-year visions from each stakeholder perspectives
- ◆ A Total Improvement Process model (TIM Pyramid)
- ◆ 4-year objectives for each stakeholder vision
- ◆ First year activities to achieve objectives
- ◆ One-year action plans for the objectives
- ◆ National Quality Council – member roles and responsibilities
- ◆ How will the initiative be funded?
- ◆ Tasks to be completed within the first 90 days
- ◆ What is the communication plan