Chartered
Management
Institute

Pathways to Management and Leadership

Level 3: First Line Management

Unit 3007V1

Maintaining Quality Standards

Pathways to Management and Leadership

Unit 3007V1: Maintaining Quality Standards

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First edition 2005

Revision author:	Ian Favell
Series consultant:	Merritt Associates
Consultants:	Philip Cullen Graham Hitchcock Reginald Snell
Project Manager:	Sid Verber
Editor:	Lyn Ward
Page layout by:	Decent Typesetting

Second edition 2008

Revision author: Ian Favell

Revised July 2013

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data. A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 0-85946-546-2

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SAMPLE MATERIAL

Maintaining Quality Standards

Contents

About this workbook 7
The unit 7
The aims of this workbook 7
Syllabus coverage 8
Getting started 8
How to use the workbooks 8

Section 1 Quality systems 11
What is quality? 11
Legal issues 14
Quality systems 17
Summary 31

Section 2 Your team and customers 33
What do your customers expect? 33
The benefits of a quality focus 38
Summary 43

Section 3 Measuring quality 45
What to look for 45
Checking the work 46
Taking the measurements 52
Analysing the results 54
The quality audit 61
Action planning 64
Quality circles 66
Summary 68

Before you move on 69
Preparing for assessment 69
Reflecting on progress 71
Planning your next steps 71
The Management and Leadership Standards 72

Bibliography **73**
Websites 73

Appendix 1: The control loop **75**

Appendix 2: Fishbone diagrams **77**

About this workbook

The unit

The main purpose of this workbook is to support you as you study for the Chartered Management Institute Level 3 — First Line Management, so it specifically focuses on the content of the syllabus for Unit 3007V1, *Maintaining Quality Standards.*

This workbook provides underpinning knowledge and develops understanding to improve your skills as well as to prepare for future assessment. If you are studying towards the Level 3, then you will be assessed by your approved centre on 'your knowledge and understanding of' the following learning outcomes:

1. understand the concept of quality
2. understand the impact of quality on team operations
3. understand how to measure an aspect of quality for a team activity.

The content may also assist you with some aspects of Unit 3003V1, *Meeting Stakeholder Needs*.

The aims of this workbook

This workbook aims to help you learn how to:

- explain the ideas of quality, quality assurance and quality control to your team
- outline the benefits of a 'quality' culture and help to create or extend it
- measure quality in your area, carry out a basic quality audit and follow up on actions.

Syllabus coverage

The table below shows which sections of the workbook address each assessment criteria of the qualification syllabus.

Unit 3007V1: Maintaining Quality Standards **Syllabus coverage**	**Addressed within section**
1.1 Describe the meaning of ‘quality’ in the organisational context	1
1.2 Identify the role and responsibilities for quality in the organisation	1
1.3 Describe the factors that affect quality in the organisation	1
2.1 Identify areas of team operations that can be affected by quality	2, 3
2.2 Identify the benefits of quality to a team	1, 2
2.3 Describe the impact of team quality on the organisation’s objectives	2, 3
3.1 Explain how work is measured against quality standards	1, 3
3.2 Explain how to measure work against organisational quality standards	3
3.3 Describe how to respond to quality measurement results	3

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Getting started

The idea of ‘quality’ is built into everything we buy, produce, provide, use or do at work. How can you assess whether things are of high quality, or even acceptable quality?

This workbook sets out to help you to identify what ‘high quality’ means, and to explore how you could introduce, maintain and improve quality control and quality assurance in your workplace, to enable your area to achieve as high a quality as possible.

How to use the workbooks

The workbooks provide ideas from writers and thinkers in the management and leadership field. They offer opportunities for you to investigate and apply these ideas within your working environment and job-role.

Structure

Each workbook is divided into sections that together cover the knowledge and understanding required for that unit of the Level 3 in First Line Management. Each section starts with a clear set of objectives that identify the background knowledge to be covered, and the management skills in the workplace that enable you to demonstrate this knowledge. You do not have to complete the sections in the order they appear in the workbook, but you should try to cover them all to make sure that your work on the unit is complete. There are self-assessment questions at the end of each section that allow you to check your progress. You may want to discuss your answers to the self-assessment questions with your line manager or a colleague.

Activities

Throughout the workbooks there are activities for you to complete. These activities are designed to help you to develop yourself as a manager. Space is provided within the activities for you to enter your own thoughts or findings. Feedback is then provided to confirm your input or to offer more ideas for you to consider.

To get the best from the workbooks, you should try to complete each activity fully before moving on. However, if the answer is obvious to you because the issue is one you have encountered previously, then you might just note some bullet points that you can then compare quickly against the feedback. You may sometimes find it difficult to write your complete response to an activity in the space provided. Don't worry about this — just keep a separate notebook handy, which you can use and refer to as needed.

Try not to look at the feedback section before completing an activity. You might like to try covering up the feedback with a postcard or piece of paper while you are working through an activity.

Timings

Timings are suggested for each section and activity, although it is important that **you** decide how much time to spend on an activity. Some activities may occupy only a few moments' thought, while others may be of particular interest and so you might decide to spend half an hour or more exploring the issues. This is fine — the purpose of the activities is to help you reflect on what you are doing, and to help you identify ways of enhancing your effectiveness. It is always worth writing something though, even if it's brief — the act of writing will reinforce your learning much more effectively than just referring to the feedback.

Scenarios

There are scenarios and examples throughout each workbook to illustrate key points in real workplace settings. The scenarios cover a wide range of employment sectors. As you work through, you might like to think of similar examples from your own experience.

Planning your work

The reading and reflection, scenarios and activities in each section of the workbooks are designed to take around two hours to complete (although some may take longer). This is a useful indicator of the minimum length of time that you should aim to set aside for a study session. Try to find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted and where you can keep your workbooks, notes and papers reasonably tidy. You may also like to think about the time of day when you work best — are you a ‘morning person’ who likes to get things done at the start of the day, or do you work better in the evening when there may be fewer disturbances?

Preparing for assessment

Further information on assessment is available in the Student Guide produced as part of the *Pathways to Management and Leadership* series. If you have any further questions about assessment procedures, it is important that you resolve these with your tutor or centre co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Further reading

Suggestions for further reading and links to management information are available via ManagementDirect through the Study Support section of the Institute's website at http://mde.managers.org.uk/members. Alternatively, email ask@managers.org.uk or telephone 01536 207400. You will also find titles for further reading in the Bibliography at the end of this workbook.

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Section 1 Quality systems

Learning outcomes **(about 2 hours)**

By the end of this section you should be able to:

1.1 Describe the meaning of ‘quality’ in the organisational context

1.2 Identify the role and responsibilities for quality in the organisation

1.3 Describe the factors that affect quality in the organisation

2.2 Identify the benefits of quality to a team

3.1 Explain how work is measured against quality standards.

Quality is a big issue in today’s world. Everyone wants it, and, increasingly, people are prepared to complain if they don’t get it. However, not everybody stops to consider how they might define what they mean by quality, and what makes the difference between high quality, acceptable quality, and unacceptable quality.

There are a number of schemes and processes that try to assist with this. You may have come across some of them already. (The workbook for Unit 3005V1, *Identifying Development Opportunities*, looks at Investors in People; customer service is covered in the workbook for Unit 3003V1, *Meeting Stakeholder Needs*.)

This section starts by looking at the term ‘quality’ and why quality is important. You will look at a range of different approaches that are used to help achieve quality.

What is quality?

Activity

Activity 1.1 **(about 5 minutes)**

How would you define ‘quality’?

Feedback

You have probably written something along the lines of:

- *how good a product or service is*
- *the extent to which a product or service meets the requirements of the customer*
- *the extent to which a product or service does what it says it will do*
- *how the product or service is (or is not) better than others of its type.*

These are typically what we might think of as 'quality'. You should note the underlying message that quality can be bad as well as good. It is the extent of the 'goodness' that most organisations (and customers) are concerned with.

The word 'quality' comes from Latin *qualis*, meaning 'of what kind'. Dictionary definitions include:

- the degree or extent of excellence of something.
- general excellence; high standard
- a distinctive or distinguishing talent or attribute
- the basic nature of something.

The definitions seem to indicate a kind of *measure*, and this is also suggested by the Latin origin. The second definition seems to suggest that quality is associated with excellence, which mirrors the common business usage of the phrase.

However, quality is a relative term. What matters is exactly what it is relative *to*: for example, customers' expectations, government requirements, or manufacturers' descriptions. Does the product or service live up to these things?

The Chairman of the Quality Methods Association provides the following definition:

> *I would define quality as 'delighting the customer'. This implies a very good knowledge of what the customer wants and good control of key product parameters (value for money, reliability, durability, performance, delivery on time etc).*

So, in business, quality really means meeting people's needs to an extent that they are happy with.

Activity

Activity 1.2 **(about 5 minutes)**

Why is quality important?

Feedback

If you don't provide what people want, or at least something very close to what they want, then you won't be in business very long. Also, you will probably find that much of your time is spent addressing complaints.

It's important to recognise that quality is in the eye of the receiver, so organisational quality is of no use if the receiver does not want or benefit from it.

Deming was one of a number of writers who first considered issues of quality in organisations. He captured many of the reasons why quality is important, in his 'quality-centred model' (figure 1).

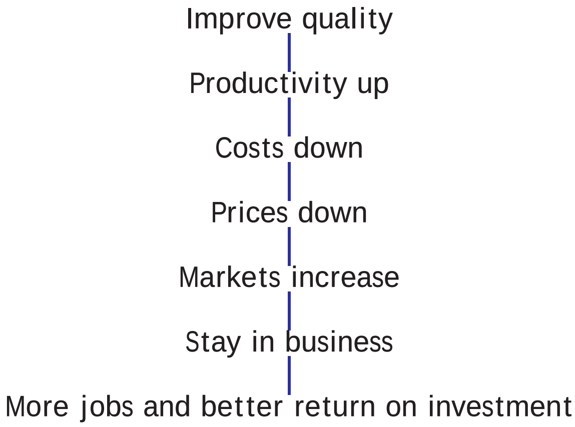
Improve quality
Productivity up
Costs down
Prices down
Markets increase
Stay in business
More jobs and better return on investment

Fig. 1 Deming's quality-centred model
(Source: Hodgson, A. (1987) *Deming's Never-Ending Road to Quality*, in Personnel Management, July 1987)

So, quality is important for a range of both positive and negative reasons.

Activity

Activity 1.3 **(about 5 minutes)**

What are the implications of getting quality wrong?

Feedback

You may have spotted that quality is not something that you can get right or wrong: it can only be good or not good when compared to the expectations of those who are measuring it (for example, customers and clients, supervisors or managers).

However, you probably identified some of the following outcomes of poor quality:

- *angry or upset clients and customers*
- *increase in complaints*
- *loss of business*
- *loss of market share*
- *unsold stock*
- *damaged organisational reputation*
- *damaged departmental reputation*
- *questions about the effectiveness or even viability of your operation from senior managers*
- *questions about your personal competence from senior managers*
- *failed inspections, if you work in a regulated environment (such as catering, health, education, or transport)*
- *legal challenges*
- *demotivated and unhappy staff.*

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Poor quality is not an option in today’s business world. You should aim for high and consistent quality in all your dealings with all your customers.

The two main types of customer are:

- external — those outside your organisation, usually the people who buy and use your products and services
- internal — those inside your organisation who use the outputs from your own section.

It is important to always consider both types of customer — especially if you are not usually in touch with those who ultimately purchase your organisation’s products and services. (The workbook for Unit 3003V1, *Meeting Stakeholder Needs* looks at the different types of customer.)

Legal issues

Many people don’t think about the legal issues in relation to quality. However, there are several regulations that have a bearing on quality issues, and these may affect the approach you choose to take.

Activity

Activity 1.4 **(about 5 minutes)**

Which laws do you think might relate to quality issues?

Feedback

There are a number that have particular significance, such as:

- *Consumer Protection Act*
- *Trades Description Act*
- *Supply of Goods and Services Act*
- *Sale of Goods Act*
- *Water Act*
- *Clean Air Act.*

You may also have included the Data Protection Act in your list. It requires that information stored should be relevant, appropriate and up to date, and meet only the needs specified for the database or filing system concerned. In other words, the information should be of high quality.

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Because the legislative framework changes so frequently, it is best to use the internet to check the latest position on any Act that interests you.

Consumer Protection Act

The aim of the Consumer Protection Act is to help safeguard the consumer from products that do not reach a reasonable level of safety. Clearly, safety is a quality issue. The law requires that goods sold, and services provided, are of a sufficiently high standard so that users are not put at risk.

Trades Description Act

This set of regulations focuses on controlling the accuracy of statements made by businesses about their goods and services.

It is an offence to give a false or misleading description of goods or services. One issue of quality is how goods are described and the extent to which they actually meet those descriptions.

Supply of Goods and Services Act

This set of regulations covers the work done and the products supplied by professionals and those in crafts and trades areas.

It applies to many categories of provider, such as hairdressers, builders, designers, dentists, consultants — in fact, anybody who is supplying a service that is paid for.

Like the Sale of Goods Act, this law is clear about any materials used — all goods supplied must conform to the details in the contract or the customer is entitled to have them replaced or repaired (or to have the price reduced).

When it comes to work itself, the provider has a ‘duty of care’ towards the customer and the customer’s property. Any quality standard or price you agree must be honoured.

Where the contract specifies that ‘time is of the essence’, then the timing of the contract becomes a critical quality issue, and must be complied with. If this is not specified, then the job must still be done within a reasonable time. However, it is best to always include a timescale, otherwise the quality issue of defining ‘a reasonable time’, will be difficult, as it may depend on a range of circumstances.

Sale of Goods Act

This set of regulations focuses on the conditions that all goods sold by a trader must meet. The goods must be:

- of satisfactory quality
- as described
- fit for purpose.

‘Satisfactory quality’ means that the goods do not suffer from minor flaws or major problems. It also means that products must last for a reasonable time.

‘As described’ refers to any advertisement or verbal description made by the trader about the goods.

‘Fit for purpose’ covers not only the main function of the goods but also any purpose you discussed with, and were given assurances about, by the trader.

Customers are entitled to a full refund if they buy something that does not meet these conditions, or they are entitled to have the goods repaired or replaced within a reasonable timeframe.

Clean Air Act

This set of regulations mainly concerns factories. The original Act was passed in 1956 with the aim of reducing pollution from smoke. The Clean Air Act regulates the release of dark smoke from industrial and commercial premises and chimneys. Local authorities hold power to designate smoke-controlled areas.

Water Act

The Water Act sets out to:

- further the sustainable use of water resources
- strengthen the voice of water consumers
- increase the opportunity for competition in the supply of water
- promote water conservation.

Among other things, it provides a framework for the water industry to improve the quality of service.

Activity

Activity 1.5 **(about 10 minutes)**

Considering the key legislation, what should you be paying attention to in terms of the quality of what you and your team deliver?

Feedback

You probably mentioned things such as:

- *clearly specifying exactly what you will provide, and to whom*
- *ensuring that descriptions of your services and products are factually correct and not misleading in any way*
- *specifying a timeframe that is appropriate for the delivery of your goods or services*
- *delivering exactly what you have promised*
- *delivering within the timeframe promised*
- *ensuring that any goods are safe for use, and appropriate for the use to which they will be put*
- *checking that your customers or clients are happy with the results (and if not, rectifying matters quickly)*
- *ensuring that your processes are as environmentally friendly (in terms of waste and pollution) as is possible.*

Later in this workbook you will be undertaking a Quality Audit. The list above can be a useful starting point for such an audit, to help you to think through the extent to which your operation truly has a quality focus in your own organisation.

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Quality systems

There are many approaches to the management of quality. Some are about reacting to quality shortfalls, some focus on continuous improvement in the production of goods and services, and some have a more organisation-wide customer focus on all activities.

As you read through a selection of well-known ideas here, you should consider what happens in your organisation and in your area, and the strengths and weaknesses of the various ideas if they were to be used (or are being used) where you work.

You should note that there are some key differences in approach between the ideas. These differences relate to:

- their main focus and objectives
- the stages of the operation that they apply to
- the systems and processes that are needed to run them
- the actions that result from them.

Quality control (QC)

Activity

Activity 1.6 **(about 5 minutes)**

How would you describe quality control (QC)?

Feedback

QC is a traditional quality process that has been around for many years. The focus is on checking the outputs of a production or service delivery process to ensure that it meets the specification. Usually, it consists of quality inspection of the final goods or services to decide whether an item has 'passed' or 'failed' the quality inspection. Those that pass are available to customers, those that fail are rejected (and in a manufacturing environment, are often considered to be scrap).

Examples of QC might include:

- *testing that a laptop functions fully before packaging for delivery*
- *proofreading a letter before it is sent out*
- *examining stitching after a medical procedure, to ensure the wound is secure and healing appropriately*
- *inflating a repaired car tyre to ensure that air no longer escapes from the puncture.*

QC is often deeply embedded within the organisational process, and has both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of QC include:

- Faulty products and services can be identified and rejected before they reach the customer.
- It is clear who has responsibility for quality checking (the inspectors and inspection system).
- Statistics about numbers and types of fault can easily be collected for monitoring performance.

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