



The Importance of Quality Circle in an Organisation

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ABSTRACT

Quality circles are a formal, institutionalized mechanism for productive and participative problem-solving interaction among employees. A circle with less than 5 members would lose its vitality due to high rate of absenteeism. The main objectives, benefits, advantages and disadvantages, problems and limitations are discussed in this paper.

KEYWORDS

quality circle, • Personality advancement, team work, positive attitude

Meaning

Quality Circle is a small group of employees in the same work-area or doing a similar type of work who voluntarily meet regularly for about an hour every week to identify, analyse and resolve work-related problems, leading to improvement in their total performance, and enrichment of their work life" (Udupa 1986). "Quality circles are a formal, institutionalized mechanism for productive and participative problem-solving interaction among employees" (Lozano & Thompson 1980).

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"Quality control circle is not just a little room adjacent to the factory floor, whose occupants make a nuisance of themselves to everyone else. It is a state of mind and a matter of leadership with everyone from the president to production trainee involved" (Rehder 1981).

Features of Quality Circles

The main features of quality circle are:

(a) Quality circle is a small group of employees

Quality circle is a small group of employee of 8 to 10. A circle with less than 5 members would lose its vitality due to high rate of absenteeism. This may cause a circle to become inactive. On the other hand, more than 15 members in a circle could result in denial of

opportunity for active participation by every one. As 34 such, 8 to 10 are recommended as the minimum and maximum strength of quality circles respectively. The reason for such numbers is that number of interaction among members would be manageable.

(b) Quality circle is organized in the same work area or doing similar type of work

A quality circle is a homogeneous group and not an inter-departmental or inter-disciplinary one. Members participating in circle activities must be on the same wave-length. Discussions taking place at the meetings should be intelligible to each one of the members. This is possible only if the composition of the circle includes employees working in the same work area or engaged in a similar type of work. Designations of members need not necessarily be equal but the work in which they all are engaged should be common. For example, in any assembly area, turner, drillers, electricians, and unskilled workers, etc., could decide

to form a circle. Similarly, circles could be composed of stenographers in an office, operators on a group of milling machines, nurses in hospitals, draughts men in an engineering

section, clerks in a bank's. etc.

(c) Quality circles are voluntary

Employees decide to join quality circles on their own willingness. No compulsion, coercion or pressure can be brought on any employee to join or not to join quality circles. This is based on voluntarism principle.

(d) Quality circles meet regularly for about an hour every week

Normally, a quality circle meets for about an hour every week. It is therefore possible for the circle to meet atleast three or four times a month. The regularity of such meetings is very significant and it must be adhered to. These meetings could be conducted during or after working hours. This decision is left to quality circle members themselves. For example the

Bharath Heavy Electric Ltd., Bangalore, have been conducting the meetings for an hour after the shift hours on every Saturdays (QCFI Convention Report 2008).

(e) Quality circle leads to total performance

As quality circles resolve work related problems relating to quality, productivity, cost reduction, safety etc. the total performance of the work area naturally improves. This results in both tangible and intangible gains to the whole organization. Empirical data provided in chapter 5 would substantiate this feature of quality circle.

(f) Quality circle enrich work life

The spin off benefits of quality circles of the organization includes enrichment of the work life of their employees apart from attitudinal changes, cohesive team culture, etc. Improved working environment, happier relations with co-employees, greater job satisfaction

etc. are responsible for this enrichment of their work life.

Objectives of a quality circle

The perception of quality circles is 'Appropriateness for use' and the tactic implemented is to avert imperfection in services rather than their verification and elimination later. Quality circle is not a task force because it can be made a permanent feature of the organization. The objectives of a quality circle can be broadly characterized as given below:

- To contribute actively towards the improvement and development of the organization.
- To exist within the prevailing organizational structure to overcome the barriers so as to foster an open exchange of ideas.
- To develop a positive attitude and a feel of a sense of involvement in the decision making process amongst the

- employees
- To help employees to respect humanity and to build a happy work place worthwhile to work.
- To display human capabilities completely and to draw out the numerous possibilities in a long run.
- To improve the quality of products and services.
- To improve various competencies. This is also one of the goals in all organizations.
- To reduce the cost and the wasteful efforts in the long run.
- To improve efficiencies which in turn reduce the lead time resulting in an improvement in meeting customers due dates.
- Customer satisfaction is the fundamental goal for any organization. Quality circles help in achieving this goal and help the organization to be competitive for a long time.

PROBLEMS IN QUALITY CIRCLES

The basic problem in QC is the absence of the right type of attitude both among managers as well as among workers managers may feel that QC dilute their authority and importance.

Delay in implementation of suggestions given by QCs may affect the operation of Qcs.

Non members may sometimes pose problems to the operation and functioning of Qcs.

In the Indian context there may be problems in organising qcs owing to the low level of education and lack of leadership abilities amongst workers.

There may be operational problems like members not being permitted to hold meetings during office hours, irregularity of meetings etc.

Benefits of Quality Circles

- **Team Work:** It helps to eradicate inter-team conflicts and clashes and enhance the concept of team spirit.
- **Positive Attitude:** Employees start working with a positive attitude towards work, assuming it as their own work. They develop a "Can Do" and "I care" attitude.
- **Personality advancement:** Quality circle practice helps to learn new skills and also brings out the hidden potential of employees.
- **Positive working environment:** It improves the organizational working environment and involves employees in every process, right from a small decision to a big deal.
- **Increased productivity:** It helps in increasing overall productivity of organization by improvement of work processes and reduction of excessive costs. They increase operational efficiency, improve quality, and promote innovation.

Limitations of quality circles;

- Quality circle is formed by group of people to analyze and solve work related problems by having regular meetings.
- The meetings held by quality circle are informal in nature. The objective of quality circle is make workers conscious about quality, to improve loyalty, commitment and also to involve grass root workers to improve quality, etc.
- The different operations performed by quality circles are: problem identification, prioritization, analysis, action plan, presenting ideas to the management, etc

- The limitations involved in this method are time and cost, disappointments over optimistic members, lack of enthusiasm of the management.
- Higher quality and productivity of products, better utilization of resources, development of leadership, etc

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