



Ten Minutes of Your Time. Lasting Business Impact.

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"Wherever you go, there you are."

- Anonymous

What's On My Mind This Week

You Are Here

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Do you remember a time when you were lost? You knew where you were going, but couldn't get there because you didn't know your present location. Every journey is a trip from one point to the next, so knowing your current position is just as important as your destination.

It's the same with corporate transformations. Many well-intended efforts get derailed because they don't assess the company's current status. Without an accurate starting point, leaders can't plan a successful path to the destination or communicate the required actions and benefits.

There are ways to get a GPS-worthy fix on your position, but let's take a few minutes to apply some simple dead reckoning to determine your organization's longitude and latitude. If you're on the path to quality, look around and see if any of these descriptions match your surroundings - you might be surprised where you find yourself.

Conviction. At this stage emotion dominates, as individual action and rhetoric are paramount. "We must do something about quality," is the rallying cry. The constant firefighting has become tiresome and fixing customer issues is one of the company's core competencies.

Management begins to talk about quality. A team is dispatched to investigate available paths and resources. Every employee has his or her own definition of quality, but the idea of doing things better has great appeal - if only everyone would just do it. Since there is no company-wide approach, various books are purchased and distributed. Hearing management's concern, some people identify small improvements in their work areas. A team might be selected to run a pilot program, just to prove quality will actually work in the organization.

People who visit see recognition for superior customer service in the hallways and on employee's desks. The most celebrated people are those who 'go above and beyond' and 'fight for the customer'.

Customers are told someone took personal action to solve their issue. The message is: You need someone on the inside looking out for you.

The conviction stage is not sustainable, as it is all talk and no action. Management needs to align its resources with its rhetoric, or the staff will stop listening whenever the quality speech begins. The subject either fades from discussion or the company moves to the commitment stage.

Commitment. This phase begins with a budget and is where visible action dominates. Since management's words and concern didn't fix the problem, an organization-wide effort begins.

Individuals are assigned to lead the change effort, and people are trained in the quality philosophy and tools. With a consistent definition of quality, root-causes of problems are identified and eliminated. Details of successful improvement projects line the hallways. Everyone begins to understand that quality is achievable, and doing things right the first time is the right answer - even if we're not there yet.

People who visit are impressed by the company's passion for quality - it's posted on banners, t-shirts and coffee cups. The most celebrated people work on process improvement projects.

Customers are told about the initiative to do things right. The message is: We're committed to improvement, so expect better service in the future.

The commitment stage is sustainable, as long as money is continually allocated to the effort. Unfortunately, it can become all program activity with no change in the organization's mindset. In companies where management delegates responsibility for change, results are short-term financial, rather than long-term transformational. In time, these organizations lose focus and allocate resources to new pursuits. If management is serious about transformation, the way the company thinks about quality changes and it enters the conversion stage.

Conversion. To reach the conversion phase, management must see quality as integral to the fabric of the organization and not as a program. At this point, people have seen quality principles solve so many problems and generate so much value, each item on the business agenda is viewed through this lens. Process improvement projects are not posted in the hallways, but embedded into all corporate

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transformation efforts. It is well understood that quality, like money, touches the entire organization. Problems are prevented before they appear and change is less stressful and more successful.

People who visit feel something is different about this organization than other companies they know. The most celebrated people demonstrate daily that quality is a core personal value.

Customers are told everyone receives the same treatment. The message is: Every customer is special and should expect this level of service.

The conversion state is sustainable, because quality is a value held by each person in the organization. As long as new employees are properly assimilated into the corporate culture, program costs trail off and benefits continue to accrue.

This is where the path would end if we lived in a static world. Unfortunately, future events and new ideas will challenge the organization's commitment. When this happens, the company moves forward into certainty or slides backward to an undetermined place.

Certainty. Once new challenges force the organization to reexamine its value system, the company can enter the certainty stage. Some challenges are external shocks from the business environment and others come from within. For example, many service quality leaders lost their customer focus during the reengineering boom of the early 1990s. Newly-minted Six Sigma companies had to evaluate Silicon Valley's mantra of speed to market against the discipline of launching defect-free products. Today, many low-cost outsourcing opportunities exist, but some of these suppliers do not yet have a quality mindset.

While these shocks can be disruptive to a transformed company, they can be even more damaging to organizations in earlier phases. Because falling from a high place creates opportunities to stop before the hard, jarring landing, it's best to navigate the early stages as quickly and painlessly as possible.

By now, you've probably seen some very familiar landscape - or your company might be completely off the map. Once you've determined your location, consider the following questions:

- Where is your organization? What are your indicators?
- Where are you? What are your indicators?
- What is required for your organization to reach the next stage?
- Is quality an initiative, or has it become a core value in your company?
- How confident are you that quality will remain important to your organization?

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Take The Next Step...

Your company can become certain about quality. Come to PCA's "Creating the Reliable Organization" Management College to find out how.

The next open-enrollment colleges take place **April 13-15 in Las Vegas, Nevada** and **June 15-17 and September 14-16 in Orlando, Florida**. Alternatively, PCA can conduct a dedicated college for your organization, either at your facility or at a designated location near you.

For additional information, please call 800-722-1464 or [email us](#).

About Take Ten Minutes

Take Ten Minutes is a weekly publication of [Philip Crosby Associates](#) and [The Capability Group](#).

The premise behind *Take Ten Minutes* is simple: take ten minutes out of every week to refocus and recommit to business improvement. *Take Ten Minutes* features quotes and interviews to inspire you. We also pull articles from today's headlines as examples of the power of the preventive culture (or the deep problems caused by not having one).

As the name suggests, *Take Ten Minutes* is relentless with the editing razor and keeps each issue tight - each issue should take you no more than ten minutes to read, start to finish. You'll reap even bigger rewards if you kick in an extra ten minutes to discuss the ideas with a colleague or to take an idea found here and plan to roll it out in your organization. We hope *Take Ten Minutes* becomes the business improvement equivalent of your running partner, providing the inspiration you need to lace up and "just do it" on those weeks when the couch seems oh-so preferable.

We hope you enjoy *Take Ten Minutes*. As Philip Crosby said, improving your business "is a journey that never ends." So let the journey...*continue!*

Please send story ideas or comments to our [editor](#).

About Our Companies

In today's marketplace, only capable companies will survive and thrive. The overarching goal of [Philip Crosby Associates](#) (PCA) and [The Capability Group](#) (TCG) is to give companies the culture, tools, methodology and results-focused support to become 'Capable Organizations' - useful, reliable, adaptable, and ever-focused on achieving customer success.

PCA and TCG deliver on this goal by first working with clients to assess where they are on the

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