



## Ten Minutes of Your Time. Lasting Business Impact.

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"Hassle comes about because of vacillation in management's dedication to the policies and processes. When no one can count on anything, no one can count on doing it right the first time."

- Philip Crosby *Quality Without Tears*

### What's On My Mind This Week

#### My Daughter's Left Foot

Last Tuesday, I nearly ran over my seven-year-old daughter's foot with a 3,575-pound Subaru Outback. And that got me thinking about how quality is defined as conformance to requirements.

Before you report me to the Department of Social Services (or commit me to the nearest insane asylum), allow me to explain:

We got out of the house later than usual that particular morning since Emma was being particularly cute. Her favorite doll had apparently contracted a nasty flu overnight, causing my girl to shift into Serious Momma Mode. When Emma should have been getting dressed, she was hunkered down at the kitchen table, authoring detailed doll care instructions in her meticulous second-grade handwriting. When Emma should have been packing her schoolbag, she was sitting me down on the couch to review these instructions. (I was informed that the doll would accompany me to work so I could administer twice hourly doses of "medicine" - a frothy, pinkish shampoo-based concoction thoughtfully packed for portability in an empty see-thru film canister.) When Emma should have been putting on her shoes and coat, she was sneaking her doll's "favorite blanket" into my laptop case.

Incredibly adorable? Absolutely. Delay inducing? You bet. But that sage that lurks in every mom's mind - the one that knows all too well that little girls become big girls much too fast - insisted I quiet my inner worrywart and embrace the concept of lateness. When we finally exited the house, we were ten minutes off schedule. (*OK, fifteen.*) So, when we arrived at the bus stop, it was no huge surprise that the bus had already pulled up and kids were already boarding. (*OK, the last kid had boarded and the door was seconds away from being fully closed.*)

Emma panicked. Apparently she thought that the planet would cease to revolve if she didn't get on Bus Number Nine this particular winter morning, because before I even threw the car in park she had flung her door open and had jumped out and had immediately begun shrieking. Car finally in park, I dashed over to find her shoe firmly wedged under my Pirelli. (Whoever invented the slip-off shoe is forever my hero, as the shoe I found under said Pirelli was utterly, blissfully footless; Emma must have wiggled free precisely when things started getting weighty.) Her ankle was a little skinned, so I knew I'd have to ask a heavy medical question to determine if the tears were caused by bog-standard fear or excruciating pain: *"Forget about that silly old bus; does anyone want to go to Dunkin' Donuts for hot chocolate?"*

Now what does this pretty major mishap have to do with conformance to requirements, you ask?

Think of my little family as a business; Emma is an employee and I, naturally, am management. Our product, Monday through Friday, is one non-frazzled child deposited safely on Bus Number Nine. We have identified the requirements that need be fulfilled to generate this product. We have created policies and processes to ensure these requirements are met. So what went wrong?

Management failed the employee. When tooth-brushing time came and went without a single tooth scrubbed and I looked the other way, I was showing a lack of respect for the policies and processes that allow us to create a requirement-conforming product each and every time.

Management vacillated. The employee paid the price.

Today, spend some time asking yourself these questions:

- Have we established the requirements that employees are to meet?
- Do we supply the wherewithal that the employees need in order to meet those requirements?
- Do we spend all our time encouraging and helping the employees meet those requirements?

Are any of your answers "no"? Probably best to figure it out now - before you commit the business equivalent of running over a seven-year-old foot with a 3,575-pound Outback. I'm willing to bet it'll cost you more than an 85-cent Dunkin' Donuts hot chocolate to solve *that* crisis.

## **Something to Think About**

### **What's the Beef About Mad Cows?**

If you've turned on the news or cracked open a paper in the past month, chances are you've heard something about Mad Cow Disease. The fatal brain disease took center stage here in the U.S. when a "mad cow" was found in Washington state last month.

Here at PCA and TCG, we've been thinking a lot lately about how government responses to Mad Cow highlight the differences between a culture of *inspection* and a culture of *prevention*.

Having a culture of inspection is an expensive and unreliable way of getting quality. Checking and sorting and evaluating might be necessary as a stop-gap measure - as a way to calibrate, stabilize and get back on course. Eventually, however, what has to be cultivated is a culture of *prevention*. As Philip Crosby said, the error that does not exist cannot be missed.

So here's *Something to Think About*: read the U.S Department of Health and Human Services 1/26 press release, "Expanded "Mad Cow" Safeguards Announced To Strengthen Existing Firewalls Against BSE Transmission" at <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040126.html> Which safeguards perpetuate the culture of inspection? Do any move toward a culture of prevention? Then turn your magnifying glass on your *own* organization: are their any "Mad Cows" in *your* china shop?

### **About Take Ten Minutes**

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*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* will become 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 editor@taketenminutes.com.

### **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 maturity spectrum and where they want to go. For companies early in the process, we work hand-in-hand with management to install a culture of prevention - the culture that has been championed by the PCA side of our business since quality management guru and PCA founder Philip Crosby published *Quality is Free* in 1979. Over the past two decades, Crosby's techniques have been implemented by many of the Fortune 500, as well as small and mid-sized companies seeking excellence.

Once the foundation of the Capable Organization is present, TCG steps in to help clients take their efforts to the next level by further reducing costs, enhancing quality and promoting growth. TCG was founded by Kevin Weiss, who was a Quality Leader and Master Black Belt for General Electric when that company first implemented Six Sigma - a program CEO Jack Welch has attributed with "changing the DNA of GE". With a proprietary Cost-Quality-Growth™ Model created based on the knowledge that GE's success was due to much more than a typical Six Sigma deployment, TCG has helped shape Cost-Quality-Growth™ Programs for companies such as Shimano, American Express and Sony.

Along the journey to the Capable Organization, PCA and TCG provide a comprehensive set of training programs and materials as well as consulting and assessment services to accelerate progress. Products and services range from courses and CDs geared towards the education of

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hourly workers to intensive seminars for managers and executive teams.

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