



Ten Minutes of Your Time. Lasting Business Impact.

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"Writing the quality policy is the first act; getting everyone to understand that it exists and is a serious message is the second act."

- Philip B. Crosby

Is Your Quality Policy a Joke?

The other day I passed a white property-maintenance vehicle with the slogan, "A total commitment to better living," written on its door. Before I saw the corporate logo, I assumed the truck would belong to the immaculately maintained luxury complex in town. Instead, the logo revealed that the truck belonged to a company known for its properties' decrepit conditions. The grounds at its facilities are unsightly, the ceilings in the units are leaky and the tenants are usually angry about maintenance response times. Whose definition of "better living" is this?

I wondered: does this company have a quality policy behind their slogans?

Many companies don't. Some fear a written policy will limit their workers' efforts to satisfy the customer at any cost. Others put quality far down the list of corporate priorities, or believe quality is important but never took the time to craft a company policy. Regardless of the reason, many companies maintain policies on everything from email usage to expense reporting but have no stated position on the quality of their product or service.

But it is not enough to simply have a written policy. Care must be taken to ensure the policy is so specific that it cannot possibly be misunderstood. In the case of the property management company, some employees may think the organization really is totally committed to "better living", while having different definitions of what "better living" means. This fuzziness leaves people across the organization working to achieve a variety of goals with a variety of work standards. Such an important policy can leave no room for individual interpretation. Just as everyone would understand a travel policy of "All employees on flight segments less than five hours in length must purchase a coach class ticket", no one could misunderstand the statement, "We will deliver defect-free products and services to our clients, on time".

Even if a well-written policy is indeed in place, it is *still* not enough. Any such policy can become a joke if each and every individual in the business fails to live by it. The policy must be well-publicized and each department must align its goals, processes, and rewards to make the policy come to life. Management, most of all, must never be exempt. It is critical that managers not only support the policy, but behave each day in ways that actively demonstrate their commitment to the company's quality principles.

To ensure your quality policy is having the maximum impact, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your organization have a written quality policy?
- If so, is it so clear that it could never be misunderstood?
- How well is it known by employees, customers, and suppliers?
- Does everyone up and down the organization live by the policy?

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 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.

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