



## Quality's Role In Marketing

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Having spent more than 20 years in the field of quality management—as well as holding a couple of simultaneous assignments in marketing and operations—I'd just love to tell you about the importance of quality in marketing. Unfortunately, I can't.

If marketing means the act of buying or selling, then I can explain it this way: No one sets up operations based on the quality, quality systems or certifications that a company has earned. No one sets up operations to run

parts based on the price of the product either. Your customers set up their operations based on their confidence in your ability to provide the product they need *when they want it*.

**Marketplace enforces price.** The marketplace will enforce the price that any customer will pay, based on the availability of “comparable material” and delivery. The quality of your product is presumed. If the parts are not sufficient to the customer's requirements, that will be the last order that you receive. Quality is presumed, included as a normally expected part of commercial delivery. Quality is not an “extra” or “bonus.”

The *value package* of your offering is the sum total of all the features, attributes, properties and benefits that customers receive when they purchase from you rather than a competitor.

Some might argue that “higher quality” might make “lesser quality” not comparable. That seldom happens. Whatever is available that meets the customer's specification (minimum expectations) is comparable in the buyer's mind.

If you don't believe that, watch a business traveler settle for less (or more) in a rental car when there are only three left in all of Chicago. (I guess I've been on the road a bit much lately.)

If “marketing” means “the total of all activities involved in the transfer of goods from the producer or seller to the buyer,” then the role of quality and quality systems can be seen as the foundation for assuring the customer that the

goods are in fact what they are represented to be.

I look at quality systems as tickets affording entry past bars of ever-increasing difficulty. Q-1 and QS-9000 were once normal expectancy for our industry. Today, ISO-, TS-, and AS- quality standards and systems are gospel.

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**No ticket, no laundry—uh, no entry.** Without a recognized quality system, your salesperson will not even get to talk with a buyer at many of the OEM customers in the precision machined products industry. Certified quality systems are the tickets that let you bid on OEM business.

My personal view is that, in the end, the only thing that any of us can sell is our own credibility. If someone doesn't believe you, why would they buy? In this light, the quality system's role is to “accelerate the attainment of confidence in your ability to do what you say,” in the mind of the buyer. Lots of pretty colors, an embossed gold seal and fancy engraving on the certificate seem to help this process.

This is my personal view. I am certain there are many other equally valid ways of looking at the role of quality in marketing. My point is that the role of quality in marketing is foundational to the business, not sizzle added in the selling process.

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