

Quality—Same or Separate Team?

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Is there an ISO requirement that states that the Quality Manager cannot report to the Director of Manufacturing? Isn't there a conflict of interest to have Quality reporting to Production? This was a recent question discussed on a Web forum.

The answer to these questions is, "No, there is no statement that mandates who should report to whom." But the real issue is not a simple yes/no response regarding what a generic quality standard mandates. The basis of these questions assumes the age-old belief that quality professionals must not report to a production authority for fear of losing their independence.

"Having the entire team with a vested interest in solving problems, rather than being mere data adversaries, is a powerful practice that can add real value to your company."

We have all been taught that "Quality must not report to Production" in order to be sure that there is no conflict of interest. However, getting quality product out to the customer is

in the interest of the entire team. It's time to overcome the traditional view of who reports to whom as an etched-in-stone pecking order.

Let's identify the purpose of the quality function within an organization. The Quality Department neither produces product to be shipped, nor does it work to directly sell that product to customers. It is, like other functions that neither produce nor sell, overhead to the business.

So the question that has to be asked by those who serve in a Quality Department is this: "What is it that I can do to facilitate the work of those who produce and those who sell?"

"Conflict of interest" is the Number One reason why many believe that Quality must not report to Operations. But this thinking implies that those within the company do not have the same interest. If this is your sole purpose for having this existing reporting relationship, then maybe the "conflict" is the failure to communicate the vision to your entire team. Isn't everyone on the team interested in providing the best service and product?



Checks and balances are important, but must they be defined by institutional hierarchy? From the time the order is taken to the time the product is delivered, the quality of that execution process should be "owned" throughout the organization.

If there is a view that one function is responsible for the product and one function is responsible for catching non-conforming product, then maybe having a traditional reporting structure makes sense. If your concern is that having Quality report to Operations could result in corrupted decisions, then your challenge is more cultural-based. Those on your team do not have a clear vision of the ultimate purpose of the business.

Which reporting scheme will be most effective for you given the talent, culture and systems available? Having Quality report to Operations may be the most efficient and least wasteful means to assure that the quality resources are deployed to the best and most urgent advantage.

This is a teamwork opportunity. Having the entire team with a vested interest in solving problems, rather than being mere data adversaries, is a powerful practice that can add real value to your company. The authority for disposition should not be a problem if everyone involved in the process understands the requirements.

Your production manager knows how to best direct and focus support personnel. It is about getting the people to the location to assist production A.S.A.P. Having Quality report to Operations provides an encompassing "ownership" of the quality process and product.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 6

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

QUALITY

While the person pumping out the parts may have ultimate accountability, the quality function on the floor serves as a real-time, proactive voice in the process. It ultimately is a lean, best-practice approach to the utilization of your quality personnel.

We are all about implementing lean process thinking to make the best use of our time, energy and money. Why not use this lean-resources approach within our reporting structure? Having the Quality Group report to Operations could be considered to be an evolution process—a cultural transition from one of inspection to that of assurance.

From silos to lean, and from separate to team, why not

make the commitment to a team approach and leave behind the adversarial finger-pointing model of the past?

The culture of your company is the key to making this reporting structure a success. It is not just about “putting a system in place.” In order for this reporting relationship to be effective, the attitudes of all stakeholders must be aligned with what you are trying to achieve.

Educating your team on how the process embodies your intentions is both a key philosophical change and the key step to making that change a success. Don't allow past reporting practices be the deterrent to change and future success in your shop.

RECENT PMPA LISTSERVE TOPICS

PMPA members support one another through email Listserves, where they can solve problems, share advice, sell excess material and equipment, and learn about new developments and opportunities. Here is a list of topics that were recently discussed:

- Performance metrics for reviews
- Hiring veterans
- Holiday time-off policies
- Employee manuals
- Vision screening
- Medical insurance
- Medical device tax repeal
- Electrical panel problems
- Air compressor recommendations
- Floor cleaning
- Nitrogen testing
- Document laminators
- Computer brands & server selection
- Small parts catcher
- C89520 or C89833 low-lead brass
- ASTM A686, Class W-112 tool steel
- 5/16 Rd 6061-T6 Ext
- Titanium brightening
- Machining 75% Tungsten/
25% Copper Alloy

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PMPA CALENDAR

Below is the calendar of upcoming conferences and events scheduled for the 2012-2013 program year. For the latest district/chapter meeting information, please view the Calendar of Events at pmpa.org/calendar/. If you have questions about PMPA conferences or regional meetings, please contact Rob Kiener, Director of Government Affairs & Communications: 440-526-0300 or rkiener@pmpa.org.

PMPA 2012 Annual Meeting

October 26-30, 2012

The Ritz Carlton, Manalapan (Palm Beach), Fla.

PMPA Management Update Conference

February 15-17, 2013

Glendale Renaissance, Glendale, (Phoenix) AZ

National Technical Conference

April 14-16, 2013

Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH

Precision Machining Technology Show

April 16-18, 2013

Greater Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, OH



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