



The Only Question

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about the importance of the “significant few” as opposed to the “trivial many.” His law, the “Pareto Principle,” states that, “for many events, roughly 80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes.” It’s also known as the “80-20 Rule.”

So what is the one question—the only question—that you, I and, in fact, every one of us should ask each day? I think it is this: “What is better today because we came to work, did our job and will be a permanent improvement in what we do or how we do it?” That’s it.

What did we do? What is now better? Is it permanently better? What then is our plan for continuous improvement?

There are a lot of questions that we need to answer every day. “Did my parts ship?” “Did the material arrive?” “Where is that special tool?” “Does anybody know where the tool room guy went?” “Who is John Galt?”

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? How many? Does it seem like some days you live in Questionland? Don’t you just love being the person in your company that has the answers?

Do you ever think that perhaps you should be the one asking the questions rather than being the answer person? Do you wonder what it’s like to be the one that poses the questions instead of the one held accountable for the answers?

There are a number of critical questions you can ask; trying to get the answers for them could fill your whole day. I’ll bet that, together, we can come up with a hundred such questions. But as an experienced quality assurance guy, I remember the lessons of Vilfredo Pareto, who taught us



As managers, we are responsible. As craftspeople and professionals, we are responsible. As mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, we are responsible for a lot of different things. But as human beings, we face a constant struggle against forces of nature. (Volcanoes, earthquakes and tornados just happen to be in my recent history.) We also face an economy that is wildly variable and uncertain. And, we

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face a regulatory and commercial regime that is openly hostile to our mission.

What is better today because we came to work and made something better and because that improvement will stick? Can you show it to me? What is its name? Where is it in your process? Will your customers notice?

We should all ask this of ourselves, "What is better today because of what we did?" If we do, our organization will benefit from all of our activities. This is the key to continuous improvement. And continuous improvement is the key to sustainability. Sustainability of our businesses is the foundation of our American dream, a better world

and a solid economic future for us, for our employees, for their families and for our communities.

A better world...because we made it that way. Each day. Every day. Today! One continuous improvement at a time.

What question do you ask yourself every day?

2010 Annual Meeting: Learning & Sharing October 15-19 Palm Springs, California

By Rob Kiener, Director of Government Affairs & Communications: rkiener@pmpa.org

The industry's leading companies will join together at The Westin Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage (Palm Springs), California this October. There, industry leaders will reconnect and create new business relationships at the Precision Machined Products Association's 77th Annual Meeting.

During this time together, attendees will have opportunities to acquire knowledge at the daily business sessions, as well as at expanded networking experiences scheduled throughout the conference.

This year's business program includes the following presenters:

"What Will Tomorrow Look Like in America?"

—Hugh Hewitt, author, talk show host and law professor

"Increasing Profitability Through Proactive Contract Management"

—Dan Sharkey, attorney, Brooks, Wilkins, Sharkey & Turco PLLC

"Market Intelligence for the Smart Investor"

—Bob Conrad, vice president, Manning & Napier Advisors



"A View from the Hill" and "2010 Midterm Congressional Elections – A Power Shift?"

—John Guzik and Omar Nashashibi, The Franklin Partnership

"Forecasting the U.S. and Global Economy"

—Peter Navarro, author, economist and economics professor at the University of California/Irvine

The conference is open to both PMPA members and non-members. This industry-wide event offers the best opportunity for owners

and senior managers to spend time away from the daily pressures of the business. It also allows them to focus on more strategic-level issues facing North American precision machining companies and related suppliers.

Visit the PMPA Annual Meeting website for more details: pmpa.org/meetings/annual_mtg/. Or, contact Rob Kiener, PMPA Director of Government Affairs & Communications: rkiener@pmpa.org. Phone: 440-526-0300.