

Eight Steps for a Successful Quality Enhancement Process

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1. Secure the support of the organization's leadership for a quality improvement initiative. Provide qualified leadership, adequate learning resources, and appropriate policy support.
2. Begin developing quality improvement projects with selected, narrowly targeted efforts that lend themselves to process improvements and are accessible by employees. For example, select an oft repeated work process like organizing a monthly event, processing a weekly report, starting up a new project, etc., and use the Continuous Improvement Cycle to identify and implement improvements.

(The Continuous Improvement Cycle: OBSERVE → ANALYZE → PLAN → ACT)

3. Focus on achieving results in central processes first then spread efforts to more peripheral processes. "Central" processes might include core procedures used to handle issues concerning program development, administration, finances, policy, personnel, and technology that directly impact work flow.
4. Maintain consistent leadership and generate ongoing commitment from all relevant people. Most important factor is to remain patient while changes are implemented so that new outcomes can occur. Avoid quitting on the process before it matures into the improvements desired.
5. Provide just-in-time training that might be needed by using the quality improvement projects themselves as the occasions for learning. For example, use the procedure selected for improvement as the basis for learning how to conduct a rigorous and valid analysis (e.g. Force-Field Analysis, fish-bond diagram, etc.)
6. Measure quality improvements using customer-based criteria. Make sure that the people who are alleged to benefit from the improvements actually perceive themselves to do so. If not, ask for additional information and continue to make adjustments until the "right" outcome is achieved. The "end user" or "customer" (internal or external) is the ultimate source for defining what is the "right" outcome.
7. Tell people about improvements and how they were achieved. Encourage questions, discussion, and the development of stories about successful quality projects and how they occurred. Recognize and reward improvements and innovations.
8. Build the quality initiative program slowly and carefully letting it spread out through the organization naturally. Be careful to avoid letting the rhetoric about quality get out ahead of actual quality achievement. Don't talk it; do it.