

Quality and Innovation: a partner or a substitute? management system vs. innovation?

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Abstract

Many people consider innovation is quite different from quality, ahead of quality. “Today is Quality but Tomorrow is Innovation” is embedded in the slogans of several quality organizations. People argue that quality management system even hinders the creativity for innovation. We would like to discuss the relationship between quality and innovation and see if quality will be replaced by or partnered with innovation. In addition, we explore if a management system could benefit for implementing innovation.

Innovation could be defined as a change that translates an original and new idea into goods, services or practice for added value and increased profit to the organization. Innovation is a change process to make new things actually happen and accepted by people, while the contemporary quality management embraces the “change” and “breakthrough” in its continuous improvement process. For any successful innovative products or services, they must meet the quality attributes, namely, meeting customer needs, conforming product standards, fulfilling safety and reliability requirements, etc. Quality is thus considered as the basis of innovation and also guides for technological innovation decisions. We will discuss the partnering relationship between quality and innovation.

Innovation lies in the use of new knowledge to create new products and services. The discovery of new knowledge requires a successful organization of efforts, an effective process and a perfect management system. While diversified concepts of innovation management are examined, a generic framework for managing innovation is established to portray the notion in a methodical approach. The framework includes the core value and critical factors of successful innovation management. Substantiation of the framework has been carried out in Hong Kong and China in past few years. The framework is further expanded to the development of an assessment scheme. After assessing the current innovation management systems and practices with the aid of a computer-aided assessment system, the organization could formulate improvement actions according to the identified strength and weakness in order to enhance the innovation management ability to a competitive level. We will give an overview of the underlying concepts and approaches of this framework and assessment scheme, as well as a proposed PDCA type way to implement organizational innovation management in an organization.