

Repositioning the quality profession

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Abstract

In the 20th century, the quality management discipline and the quality profession made a profound difference to the quality of life.

However, as we progress into this century, the quality management movement has lost its way. The consequences of failure grow ever more significant in today's world of increasing customer and stakeholder expectations, regulatory oversight and use of social media to broadcast success or failure. Yet organisations are still failing to deliver against all stakeholder requirements.

The quality community has the opportunity to make a difference again. Through industry analysis and research, we have examined the challenges and opportunities facing the quality profession. Our findings highlighted that quality professionals need to have a broader skillset, speak the language of top management and for the industry to inspire students to pursue a career in quality.

We understand that to sustain delivery of high-quality products and services and to operate in a way that meets stakeholder needs, organisations must establish effective systems of governance and assurance, and commit to a culture of objective evaluation and continuous improvement.

That understanding has driven us to create the new CQI Competency Framework. It is structured around what quality professionals do: Governance, Assurance and Improvement, the Context, which quality professionals work in, and the Behaviours they must show. It requires:

- Asking six key questions relating to three core areas of organisational activity
- Quality professionals to operate at two levels within their organisations - enterprise and product/service delivery level
- Quality professionals to demonstrate competency in five areas of activity So why is leadership at the centre of the framework? Because the professional must shift from a 'back-foot' position as '2nd-tier' managers to a role as '1st-tier' leaders in their organisations. In that way, our profile will increase and our contributions will be even more significant.

This framework is designed to be used by:

- Individuals- as a professional development tool
- Employers- as a common standard for defining skills for the range of quality professionals, and indeed other staff
- Industry sectors- to develop supporting sector-specific bodies of knowledge
- The CQI- as a basis for developing our professional standards, knowledge and learning services, and as a basis to communicate the value of the profession.

All this might seem like a huge challenge, but the benefits to business and society are equally significant. If the profession as a whole can deliver the value that it is capable of providing then one of the key benefits will be the opportunity for businesses to exploit sources of competitive advantage. With the end-to-end and top-to-bottom perspectives that the profession possess, we are uniquely placed to exploit these exciting opportunities for our organisations.

To find out more about the CQI Competency Framework, please visit the CQI website.