

Quality Mastery by Workplace Agreement

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Abstract

Probably the biggest handicap faced by Industry in the 21st century as it attempts to either keep or outpace its competitors is the need to locate and engage quality specialists who are at the cutting edge of the quality sciences and disciplines. Whilst the core of the subject has not changed in decades, the ever increasing intensity of global competition means that the means by which these disciplines are being used is in a constant state of flux. This is born out by the ongoing and significant changes that are taking place in the structure of such standards as ISO 9001 and the dramatic appearance of 'Dantotsu' thinking in Japan and the Far East. Dantotsu meaning 'to be the best' or number 1 in both business performance, share of market and in innovation. The problem for quality related educationalists is two fold. 1. How to keep abreast of these developments themselves and 2. How to transform this new information into effective learning programmes for both existing and would be quality professionals alike. Class based learning is proving too slow a process to keep up with this rapidly changing need but some have problems with typical distance learning approaches. This paper explains a hybrid learning system which is rapidly gaining in popularity and in which the author of this paper has considerable first hand knowledge. One variant of it was popularised in the early days of Six Sigma where students were awarded certificates not simply for taking a course but for their intellectual understanding of the course material and its application to work related projects. From experience with that method, the author applied it to more broadly based quality related distance learning with some spectacular results. Not only are students applying this method to problem solving but to all other aspects of the subject as well. For example, one student having completed a work related assignment related to the Legal implications of common and statute law and the implication of key regulations in her employer's company went on to complete a research project and became the company expert. As a consequence she is now a rising star in the Chartered Quality Institute and will be travelling to Washington DC for a meeting with the FDA on behalf of her company. This is something that she could only have dreamed of no more than a year ago. The paper looks at the application of this method both to individuals and to workplace teams which is proving a successful approach at the Master's Degree level at Kingston University UK. Not only is it proving a very rapid and effective learning method, but it is a very short process from the tutor upgrading his or her own knowledge to being able to pass the new information to the student. There will be a short demonstration of some of the software used for the purpose.