



Quality Environment

SENIOR MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

What does Clinton think about TQM? "He's a big fan."

By Dick Bauer,
Retired Senior Quality Advisor,
Environmental Protection Agency

In his first year as President, Bill Clinton has lead the charge to bring Total Quality Management to the Federal government. According to an article that appeared in the March 23 issue of **The Federal Times**; if you never gave TQM thought before, maybe you should start now.

President Clinton's roots are fairly deep when it comes to experience with Total Quality. In Arkansas he studied the principles of TQM and was mentored by Asa Whitaker, the Quality Manager for Eastman Kodak in Arkansas. Clinton participated in weekly meetings with Agency heads and other management personnel to implement Quality Management and improve Arkansas state government services and delivery to customers. Under Clinton in Arkansas, 90 percent of Arkansas' 36,000 employees were trained in the principles of TQM. If his first year as President are any indication, it looks like he is trying to do the same thing with the Federal government. Vice-President Gore and Cabinet members such as Labor Secretary Reich, HHS Secretary Shalala, HUD's Cisneros, and Commerce Secretary Brown have all come out in support of Clinton's commitment to Quality Management. Clinton has launched a National Performance Review of Government, opened the White House dining room to all employees, cut limousine service by 50 percent, and created teams to look at problems such as health care. Is this TQM? Curt Reimann, the administrator of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, thinks so.

Vice President Gore is leading the National Performance Review, the embodiment of the Clinton/Gore approach to quality. The foundation for the NPR comes from principles espoused by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in their 1992 book **Reinventing Government**. (For more information, see Book Review in this issue.) These principles include being mission-driven, results-oriented and customer-driven. As part of the NPR, each Federal agency has developed improvements to the way we do business. EPA's NPR involves approximately 450 employees from all levels of the Agency on 20 teams. These teams have examined critical policy and process areas in the agency for potential improvements. Recommendations were funneled to the Administrator, Carol Browner, through the Senior Management Council, made up of Assistant Administrators, Regional Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators and Deputy Regional Administrators. A consolidated report from EPA went to the White House in August, 1993. Currently, the National Performance Review Implementation Steering Committee, co-chaired by Bob Sussman, Deputy Administrator, and Charlotte Northern, detailed to the Quality Advisory Group, is developing ways to implement these recommendations. Look for implemented improvements throughout FY 1994.

How will quality evolve at EPA? It is too soon to tell what the final product will look like, but it is clear that quality is here to stay under the Clinton administration.

BOOK REVIEW

Reinventing Government by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler by John Kelley, Facilitator, Region 5

Yes, this is another book about managing better and using Total

Quality Management (TQM) principles, but it is unique for a couple reasons: it applies specifically to government operations and Bill Clinton likes what it says. Author David Osborne has been an advisor to the President and has helped shape his ideas on how government must change to deliver services more in alignment with its customers' needs.

We are talking about sweeping and fundamental changes in government policies and structures. Osborne and Gaebler say these reinvented governments "are lean, decentralized, and innovative. They are flexible, adaptable, and quick to learn new ways when conditions change. They use competition, customer choice, and other non-bureaucratic mechanisms to get things done as creatively and effectively as possible." One concept I particularly liked was that we should think more like owners and ask, "If this were my money, would I spend it this way?"

Making government more entrepreneurial and injecting some competition has drastically improved service and controlled costs in several of the book's example cases. In Phoenix, the cost of hauling municipal waste was growing and service was failing so the city decided to contract privately for the service. The city was divided into districts and bidding for contracts was phased in over time. Interestingly, the city's waste hauling utility also bid. They didn't win the first several contracts because their costs were too high. But as they continued to innovate and become more like the private haulers, they began winning bids. Now, the city is served by a combination of private and public haulers and the cost to users has been reduced while service has improved. The point here is that the utility changed to avoid extinction.

The book criticized EPA as the "perfect example" of a command-and-control organization where we lay down rules and people are ordered to comply. It seems that people don't relish this authoritarian behavior, but prefer that government set standards where necessary and then provide incentives to achieve those levels. The authors admit that EPA's methods can be credited with substantial achievements, but they theorize that market-based incentives would have done the job faster and better. An example would be to establish a system of "green taxes" which would tax pollution and provide the economic incentive for Americans to clean up.

Lots of good examples and inspiring ideas make **Reinventing Government** highly recommended reading. It is being quoted widely in magazine articles and by leading government officials. Don't be the last one at EPA to pick up a copy. Copies are available in the Region 5 library.

QUALITY COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

The Joy and Agony of Feedback by Kathy Gunn, Region 5, Quality Coordinator

Continuous improvement, a quality principle, can be defined as constantly looking for ways to improve how we do business and making incremental changes. It is not necessary to have a "big bang" with every improvement; small steps can add up to significant organizational change. Continuous improvement is implemented by individuals looking to make the world within their reach a better place.

Developing an awareness of how you interact in the workplace and improving your personal effectiveness is one key component of continuous improvement. The following tips on giving and receiving feedback are designed to aid you in tuning up your sensor and collecting the data you need to make changes. But be forewarned, no matter how logical getting feedback may seem to our heads, it can be difficult for our hearts!

GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK:

- Tell the person you would like to give him/her feedback and set up a time that is mutually convenient. Set the context by describing the situation, the behavior, when it occurred, and what you saw happening.
- Be as descriptive as possible, and avoid evaluative words like "good/bad, right/wrong." Focus on what was effective or ineffective. This helps the receiver feel less judged. Of course, there are instances where the organization has determined that certain behavior is not acceptable or "right" and this should be communicated.
- Describe the person's behavior, not the person himself. For instance, say, "You did not call on me when I raised my hand to speak" instead of "You are a jerk for not calling on me when you knew I wanted to speak."
- Be as honest and direct as possible and show respect for the person.
- Be as objective as possible.

- Try not to overload the person with too much data all at once. There is a limit to how much information a person can digest at one time. If the person looks dazed or is arguing, (s)he has probably reached his/her limit. Regardless of how useful your feedback may be, this is not the time to pursue the conversation. Be sensitive and wait for another opportunity to communicate your perceptions.
- Give feedback on behaviors that can be changed, instead of making generalities. For instance, "I don't like it when you ignore my comments and I want you to listen to me" is more useful than "Stop being so difficult around me."
- Provide specific examples of what could be done differently next time. Say, "You could have asked for our input at x point in the meeting." This is more effective than simply complaining about certain behavior.
- Speak for yourself, not a group. Describe the situation in terms of "I saw, I suggest." This adds credibility to your feedback and also gives the receiver room to see that these are your perceptions.
- And finally, be sure to give feedback on what the individual does well, along with suggestions on how to improve. Honest feedback on our strengths is as valuable as data on what we may need to improve.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK (WHETHER IT IS GIVEN EFFECTIVELY OR NOT!):

- The most important item to remember when receiving feedback is: Whenever possible, do not argue, justify, apologize, or attack the giver of feedback. Feedback is simply feedback. It does not imply that you are an awful person or that you have made an irreversible mistake. Feedback is a mirror which reflects the way others perceive you. This information is critical if you want to make improvements to the way you do business and interact with others.
- Do not promise not to do "it" again. There is no need for this. It is okay to make mistakes and adjusting behavior takes time. Communicate your intention to change the behavior, if relevant. Do not set yourself up for failure by assuming or promising you will never do "it" again. You will not change your behavior overnight.
- Once you quiet the voice in your head that wishes to argue, justify, attack or apologize, you can begin to probe and learn as much as possible from the feedback. Clarify the information you receive by asking questions such as who, what, where, when, how, and why? These specifics

help you to identify precisely what happened, when it occurred, how the other person felt and what you might do differently in the future.

- Listen as fully as possible to the person before you respond. Giving feedback is difficult in an environment that does not readily support open and honest communication. This person has taken a risk. Usually, the act of giving feedback means that the person cares about you enough to mirror how you are perceived and provide you with invaluable data.
- Even if the feedback giver is not completely responsible in delivering the feedback, there is usually a grain of truth in what is communicated. Look for that truth in any feedback you receive. It can be painful to hear, but it is necessary for growth and change.
- After you receive the feedback, determine what you did effectively and ineffectively in the given situation. Your perceptions are also valid and should be weighed with other's feedback. Do not assume that feedback you have been given is completely true or completely false. All perceptions are "true" or valid, even when they conflict. That does not mean they are the full truth for you. Look for the useful part of each piece of feedback and put together as full a picture as you can.
- Finally, remember to say "thank you." It is important to let the person know you appreciate their perceptions and the time they have taken to share them with you. This opens the channel for future communications allowing you to benefit from new perspectives.

Receiving feedback can be difficult. But if you remove your defensiveness, it can be a valuable tool in improving your work relationships and productivity. Giving feedback effectively facilitates a learning environment in our organization. These feedback skills are critical to implementing continuous improvement and changing our work environment. Starting with ourselves is the most powerful method we can choose to create change at EPA.

MASTER FACILITATOR'S CORNER

About Constancy...

by Christopher D. Hess, Master
Facilitator, Region 7

Try these clues: it appears
uninvited. This causes some
people to welcome it and

other to fear it. It often appears so rapidly it's suddenly
"there." Its appearance is as certain as the colloquial
"death and taxes." No, I'm not describing your mother-in-
law, although the clues may fit! These are descriptions
of change — the faceless entity that unequivocally
challenges us to ever-greater levels of success.

During the summer of 1992, I was fortunate enough
to encounter some of the most brilliant minds currently
addressing the challenges of corporate and personal
effectiveness. These sources include Peter Senge,
The Fifth Discipline; Stephen Covey, **The Seven
Habits of Highly Effective People**; and Anthony Robbins,
Unlimited Power and **Awaken the Giant Within**.

These authors are extremely provocative thinkers
who consistently dwell on the shores of innovation. Each
one addresses change, as an entity, as well as the many
faces change assumes in our economic, interpersonal,
and individual lives.

As I recognized the truthfulness of their respective
works, I equally realized that many of their concepts were
not foreign — I was, in one form or another, familiar with
them. What I found in myself (as well as the organizations I
have been a part of) was the realization that we often fail to
embrace and successfully deal with change due to a lack of
concentrated action. In two words: no strategy.

My informal observations suggested that while it is
easy enough to say "that's true," it is quite another thing
to participate with truth to create a new and better
atmosphere for ourselves, our families, and our associ-
ates. Over and over again, my observations suggested
that the difference between recognizing truth and realiz-
ing change was the missing bridge of strategy.

As a result, I created a one-day curriculum workbook
entitled "Managing Change" that the Master Facilitator
Network graciously let me try on them. Instead of
predigested formula for ensuring successful change, the
curriculum was designed to enable facilitators to create
unique strategies relevant to the groups they are facilitating.

After I bought their meals for the day, my peers con-
cluded that this curriculum could be beneficial for
organizations throughout the Regions. (I'm kidding,
of course; not about the benefit — the food!) Since the
original pilot, I have banded together a group of eight other
facilitators who have agreed to present the workshop in
Region 7. In the past couple of months, we have revised
and refined the workbook to ensure that it achieves its
intention. We also refined the approach somewhat by
targeting "initiators" instead of "facilitators." Our rationale is
to equip anyone willing to serve as a change agent regard-
less of whether they are a formal facilitator.

The course will be formally offered throughout
Region 7 beginning in May 1993 and will be piloted in

Region 5 beginning in FY 1994. For more information,
call your respective Quality Coordinator.

"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain
is not due to the thing itself, but to your own estimate of it;
and this you have the power to revoke at any moment." -
Marcus Aurelius

SKEPTIC'S FORUM

TQM Goes "Public"

by John Perrecone,
Region 5, Office of Public Affairs

**Question: Total Quality Manage-
ment will never work in situations
with the public. In such situations, it is our responsi-
bility to inform the public and give EPA's official
perspective. How could we possibly use TQM
techniques?**

Answer: Experience shows that public meetings can
be one of the least effective ways of communicating
with the public. The discussion can be
monopolized by individuals or groups;
communication is one-way communication with
agencies "telling" the public what they want
them to hear; and it doesn't lend itself to
individuals expressing their concerns. Can TQM
techniques alter this situation? From recent
experience, I suggest that they can.

Successful public meetings share certain
key attributes: a clear objective, an appropriate
message for your audience, and thorough
preparation by staff and management. I
suggest adding one additional criteria: TQM
principles that allow the public and agencies to
communicate on the same plane.

It works like this: The moderator starts the
meeting as usual by providing enough back-
ground so everyone has a common under-
standing, walking through the agenda, and
acknowledging agenda items from all parties.
(Place the agenda and meeting topics on a flip
chart and keep that in plain view during the
entire meeting.)

However, before the project manager takes
"the next logical step" and launches into the
standard 30-45 minute presentation, the mod-
erator asks the audience what their questions,
concerns, and comments are relative to the
evening's agenda. What was that?! Ask your
customers how the presentation will add value?!
Yes, ask the audience what their concerns are
for that evening's topic. Paraphrase each
question, ensure that it is relevant for the
meeting, verify that it is correct, and then have a
recorder write it down verbatim. Place the
questions on a flip chart in plain view.

This shows that you care, are listening to the public's concerns, and want to conduct a meeting that meets the audience's needs as well as your own. It also shows that the agency does not want to "control" the entire meeting but wants to create a dialogue in which to answer questions.

Now, the project manager can either give the prepared presentation with an emphasis on the flip-chart comments and/or modify the talk to more precisely fit the audience's needs. (This flexibility needs to be addressed during meeting preparation time.) During the question-and-answer period, answer questions and then either the moderator or the project manager can use other similar questions on the flip charts as a springboard for further discussion. As each question is addressed, have the recorder place a check next to it. At the end of the meeting, the moderator revisits the list to make sure that all questions have been addressed and to answer any that weren't.

At two recent Superfund meetings, which could have been contentious, I found this technique effective at defusing early tensions related to public feeling that EPA would be nonresponsive to their concerns. With this technique, the audience was engaged from the start, listened well, and was respectful because ~~we~~ listened well and treated them with respect. The public meeting actually became a useful communication tool and not an exercise in futility. Many people thanked us afterwards for our ability to listen and to respond to their concerns. Because both meetings ended within a reasonable time-frame, we were thanked for maximizing their time.

Finally, not only does this approach respond to concerns raised during the evening, but it also helps identify key community trends and issues that can be better communicated and builds trust for future community relations activities.

TQM methods *can* be successfully used in a public forum if you prepare in advance and are flexible. It does not mean that disagreements over how to proceed with projects will not occur; on the contrary, that will happen in any project and the technical adequacy of the work will always determine the plan's acceptability. Rather, this approach is a tool that creates forums that communicate with the public in a meaningful way. It shows that agencies are committed to honest, open communication with all customers and that the value-added link between EPA and its customers can lead to more effective project outcomes.

FACILITATOR PERSPECTIVE

Quality and You

by Jane DeRose-Bamman,
Region 5, Facilitator

Believe it or not, Quality organizations are not defined

by the number of Quality Action Teams (QATs) or people involved on QATs or the number of facilitators. More realistically, Quality organizations could be defined by the type of motivated, innovative, communicative people willing to take risks by providing, making and receiving feedback and suggestions to seek out improvement opportunities. With these people, an emphasis on Quality will occur, regardless of the number of QATs. Quality begins with individuals.

What can we do to improve the way we work?? Think about areas in your daily work habits, practices, accomplishments which can and should be improved upon.

One way to enhance quality in your daily lives may be to play an active role in setting your schedule. Being able to plan your day and stick to those activities could have a huge impact on the goals you meet each day. I know you must get "brush-fires" which make planning our day seemingly impossible. In addition, management directives may quickly push your top priorities to another level. With improved communication and planning there is a way to make it easier to deal with the shifting of priorities.

1. Communication is important to reduce the amount of rework that can go into accomplishing an activity. You may think you are the Great Communicator as staff person or supervisor, but you may need to take some extra time up-front to ensure that our directions and guidance are clear or, visa versa, that we understand the assignment. The way you communicate is also important. For example: Be diplomatic, be concise, ask for clarification if you don't understand. Get to know your customer. The unasked questions cost us. If we pay attention, the questions that are asked tell us where we need to improve.
2. Long term as well as short term planning can help us prioritize the things that need to be accomplished. I know, as a Region, we are trying to spend time on long term planning. Do you need to improve your short term planning skills also? Do you request something before you have thought out what you actually want and need? Have you thought about all the options before you interrupt someone else's train of thought? Remember, each "meeting" takes time from you and another person. If you don't have your thoughts and game plan down, you may be wasting your time and someone else's.
3. This brings me to something else that we all experience in some way or another: "meetings".

Just think of how much work you would get done if you did not have to attend a meeting. But yet, if we broadened our view of "meeting," we'd realize that we would get nothing done if we eliminated them. Each encounter we have with one or more persons is a meeting. Each request we make is a meeting. Telephone calls, whether pre-arranged conference call or spontaneous citizen call, are meetings. Meetings are used to obtain or relay information, for discussion, or for decision-making. Unexpected meetings are the hardest thing to stop from throwing your schedule way off.

What can be done to reduce the amount of time spent in meetings in order to maintain control of your schedule? (Jane DeRose-Bamman take note of these suggestions - please!!!)

If you call a meeting or make requests:

- Evaluate what is the most effective means of achieving the objective for all people involved. (WPO messages may work just fine.)
- Determine the objectives of the meeting and prepare a plan for meeting the objectives (agenda) including setting time limits for each step as well as the length of the meeting. (Conference calls need agendas, too.)
- Communicate your objectives for potential participants.

Allow time to negotiate commitments so they work for all parties.

- Start and end the meetings on time! Re-schedule if you run out of time.

If you receive a request, make sure you are told and understand:

- The objectives of the request or meeting.
- The requestor's plan for meeting the objectives.
- The role you will be playing in responding to the request or at a meeting.
- The value you will be adding.
- The deadlines and estimated amount of your time needed.

For your information a group of Region 5 TQM facilitators are developing information and training on how to improve our meetings. Stay tuned to this channel for announcements of upcoming events.

In conclusion, there are many other areas where individuals could have an impact on Quality. Who knows, maybe another person will take a stab at putting thoughts to paper on one of those areas. Each of us has a role to play in moving this Region towards Quality. Our improvements will be greatest if each individual continues to evaluate what is going well and what may need to be done differently. The leaps towards Quality in the Region will occur with the "baby" steps from individuals.

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Quality Environment is a semi-annual newsletter dealing with the implementation of Total Quality Management in Region 5 and the regional State environmental agencies

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