

## **TQM or When the Boss Steals Your Ideas**

By the end of World War Two, the industry of Japan had been completely destroyed. Less than twenty years later, Japan had become the second biggest economy in the world. How did they do it?

The answer is very strange. The Japanese took the same manufacturing philosophy which had been used to destroy them so completely during the war.

In the Second World War, the Americans needed to manufacture arms on a massive scale quickly and safely. And they had to achieve zero defects. One faulty bomb could kill hundreds of Americans by mistake.

The US government turned to a mathematician, William Edwards Deming, to develop the manufacturing model necessary. However, as soon as the war was over, US industries replaced quality as their top priority with maximizing profit. Mr Deming was out of a job.

But not for long. The phone rang. It was Japan and Deming became the man behind of the Japanese Miracle. In Japan, Deming's ideas turned into Total Quality Management and this is why the five principles behind the business model are Japanese words.

According to TQM, Total Quality Management, a company has three enemies. They are called muda, mura and muri. Muda means waste, such as overproduction and unnecessary processing. Mura refers to uneven levels of production and muri is about overworking your people and your machines.

Total Quality Management has 6 principles or tenets. First is quality itself or Jidoka. It is customer satisfaction that makes a company triumph. I think my Spanish internet service provider has never heard of Jidoka.

The second principle is Hansei, which means 'relentless reflection'. Sadly, most employees have no time to stop and think, all the way from board members to trainees. This, according to TQM, is bad business.

The most famous principle is that of 'continuous improvement'. Its name is kaizen and obviously is the direct result of hansei or relentless reflection. Kaizen focuses on eliminating waste. Waste is one of the previously mentioned enemies of companies, and is called, in case you don't remember, muda. Let's consider a real example of kaizen at work. During the global recession of 2009, companies were eliminating excess inventory. In other words, they discontinued products with low sales which had been wasting company resources.

When it comes to problem-solving, genchi genbutsu is the answer. Genchi genbutsu means 'go and see'. Don't waste energy shouting into the telephone. Get off your nice office chair, go and see what's happening with your own eyes and get involved directly with the problem.

Now, when you've reached a decision about how to solve a problem or how to make an improvement, nemawashi. Implement your decision rapidly.

And now for the most forgotten principle or tenet. Heijunka – level out the workload. If not, mura and muri will damage your business. Give your staff longer holidays and your company will perform better. Don't overload your production line on Friday and turn off your machines on Monday afternoons. Level out workloads, level out production, level out logistics.

Perhaps the greatest danger to companies is the boss who steals ideas from members of staff. We have all been victims of this. You suggest an idea to your boss and your boss tells you it is unviable but appreciates your input. Three months later your boss uses your idea but doesn't mention you. This is the class of person that destroys employee creativity and stops company kaizen, the principle that rebuilt Japan.

574 words; Grammar: past perfect and the imperative

