

MOTIVATION AND QUALITY-PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

*the Gerber Company
quality motivation program
at Albion College*

With the price of raw materials at an all time high in many industries and with wages breaking records in business and industry, the cost of waste, scrap and poor performance have reached proportions which business and industry can ill afford.

Therefore, quality in job performance by all employees, now deserves a very high priority. Moreover, it becomes increasingly clear that while traditional methods used in quality control are excellent for measuring results, something more is needed to stimulate and motivate people to give the kind of quality performance which is now required. Furthermore, typical quality measures usually pertain to production, but a quality job performance is needed on all jobs in all departments. Thus, a total approach to quality products and services has been designed to put the best motivational principles into action.

Space prevents any review of even the major motivational studies, but those that have looked at the early work done by Elton Mayo at the Hawthorne works of Western Electric and examined the works of Likert, Whyte, Myers, McGregor, Maslow, Gellerman and others, would find general agreement on a number of positive motivational elements. Although they might be worded differently or ranked differently, there would probably be little disagreement about including the following items in a list of positive or favorable motivating elements:

Opportunities to Grow in the Job; Opportunities for Responsibility; Opportunities for Achievement; Opportunities to Communicate; Knowledge of Organization's History and Philosophy; Identification with Organization's Goals and Objectives; Adequate Orientation to the Organization; Opportunities for Recognition; Confidence and Trust in Self and Company.

These are the recognized motivational considerations that are very much a part of this process which aims to achieve quality through people.

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PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Six years ago Lewis Beem was in charge of the Quality Control Department at the Gerber plant in Rochester, New York and he employed the best quality control methods available for measuring product quality. However, Beem recognized that a sizeable portion of quality-control effort is spent in dealing with problems resulting from human error. Therefore, if he wanted to make a really significant improvement in quality he needed to motivate all employees to view quality as an integral part of the job of each worker and "not merely the sole responsibility of the quality department."

So the problem of total on-the-job quality was studied at Gerber in a series of meetings between the quality control department and production management at both the plant and corporate levels.

As Beem himself reports in *Food Technology* (Sep. 1966), "The following basic factors emanated from these meetings:

1. "An employee must be thoroughly familiarized with the complete production process if he is to appreciate fully the importance of his job in the overall production operation.
2. Management can expect a high level of employee performance only when it has clearly defined what is expected of an employee, and then properly trains him to carry out his particular job.
3. It is not enough that quality-control regulations be followed. An employee must fully understand why they are established and why they are important.
4. An effective means of communication must exist between an employee and his foreman if the employee is to fulfill his responsibilities toward quality-control.
5. If a quality-control program or process is to be successful, it must be developed within a plant operation

with all workers contributing toward its development.

6. All matters affecting the overall quality-control program should be set forth in a comprehensive operating manual for the use of each production supervisor so that he can effectively carry out his important role in the in-plant quality-control program."

Thus, the Gerber Quality Motivation program was originally developed to put these basic concepts into action. Beem's success resulted from the practical manner in which he applied the motivational principles in a program that brought a significant improvement in quality and also in several other areas including, safety, efficiency, waste and so on. Tested in action and refined through practice, this original Gerber program has now become the new Albion College Employee Motivation process; and it can be tailored to meet a wide variety of specific applications. It is uncomplicated; it is relatively inexpensive, and it is simple to operate. Yet, it is solidly based on well-established motivational principles and has proven its effectiveness in many years of application in four plants of Gerber Products Company and more recently in numerous other companies.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCESS

As the program name shows, the major objective is to develop in each employee a personal pride in quality performance on his job, and personal interest and pride in his company.

A second major objective is to help each employee develop a feeling of personal interest and responsibility for the product or service his company delivers to the consumer. Certainly, accomplishing such a major quality objective is a large and difficult task! So how is it done? It can only be done by working through people because in the final analysis only the employee can make a quality product or render a quality service.

Thus, a third major objective is to open and strengthen the communication channel between the supervisor and each of his subordinates. Thus the face-to-face interview or dialogue is a two-way communication with the supervisor informing and the employee feeding back to promote understanding and acceptance. The supervisor instructs, but also he needs "feedback" from the employee both for clarification of ideas, and to learn the individual concerns the employee may have about his job, the company or even personal problems which may affect his work.

SUPERVISOR-EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

As illustrated in Figure 1, the first-line supervisor is the link in our process just as he is usually the important link in a shop or office or any other organization. He is the person who finally translates management planning and action into employee performance to produce the desired results. Therefore, after two or three problem-solving and employee meetings, the heart of our employee motivation process is the face-to-face meeting or dialogue between the supervisor and each of his subordinates. To be effective, this opportunity for a face-to-face, two-way discussion must be given at least three important considerations — *adequate time, top management recognition and proper preparation*. It must go beyond the kind of passer-by supervisor-employee contact that takes place in the hall, on the production line or at the coffee machine. Secondly, this supervisor-employee interview must be given the kind of attention by management that recognizes the value of the interview and a sincere and earnest preparation by the supervisor to accomplish the interview objectives.

SUPERVISOR-EMPLOYEE INTERVIEW

The specific purposes of this interview are five fold, i.e., (1) to review the specific job with each subordinate; (2) to

review the performance standards required by the job; (3) to discuss the total quality expectations and responsibilities of the job; (4) to *solicit* employee suggestions about job procedures, quality and performance; (5) to *solicit* and *listen* to employee concerns.

Given the interview idea and the listed purposes, perhaps the application seems absurdly simple. All that remains is to send a memo to all supervisors announcing that the supervisor-employee interviews shall begin next Monday. Surely all would agree that any such precipitous and unplanned action would be dangerous, to say the least, and might even invite disaster.

READINESS STEPS

An effective quality motivation process can only be truly effective and successful when the stage is set by preparation which establishes a "readiness" for the *process* to be accepted by everyone.

The ten basic preparation steps are:

1. Get top management support
2. Meet with supervisors
3. Meet with union committees
4. Establish or review supervisor's job descriptions
5. Establish or review employee's job breakdowns
6. Develop orientation slide program
7. Develop ideas for departmental:
Quality checklists
Quality training slide program
8. Establish or review machine operating procedures
9. Develop posters and publicity
10. Schedule employee orientation meetings

Numerous companies and other organizations are already doing many of these things. However, the unique quality of the Albion process lies in the manner in which the elements serve to prepare the entire organization for the actual application of the process.

In addition, while each of the ten preparatory steps is important there is flexibility in the precise path any firm

would take to implement the process. Some steps obviously precede other steps but there is flexibility of sequence and numerous preparations can be accomplished simultaneously. When adopted, this process works because it can be conducted by personnel of the organization at its own locations and at times best suited to its work schedules. A brief word on each step will indicate its relationship to the total process.

1. **Top Management Support:** Essential because the process involves an entire unit whether a single plant, division or the whole organization. Top management will lay out the ground rules, approve the plans and probably name a person or team to direct and coordinate the project.
2. **Meetings with Supervisors:** To let them know what is planned and to get their preliminary questions and reactions about how the process will affect them. "Credibility gaps"

should be avoided from the beginning.

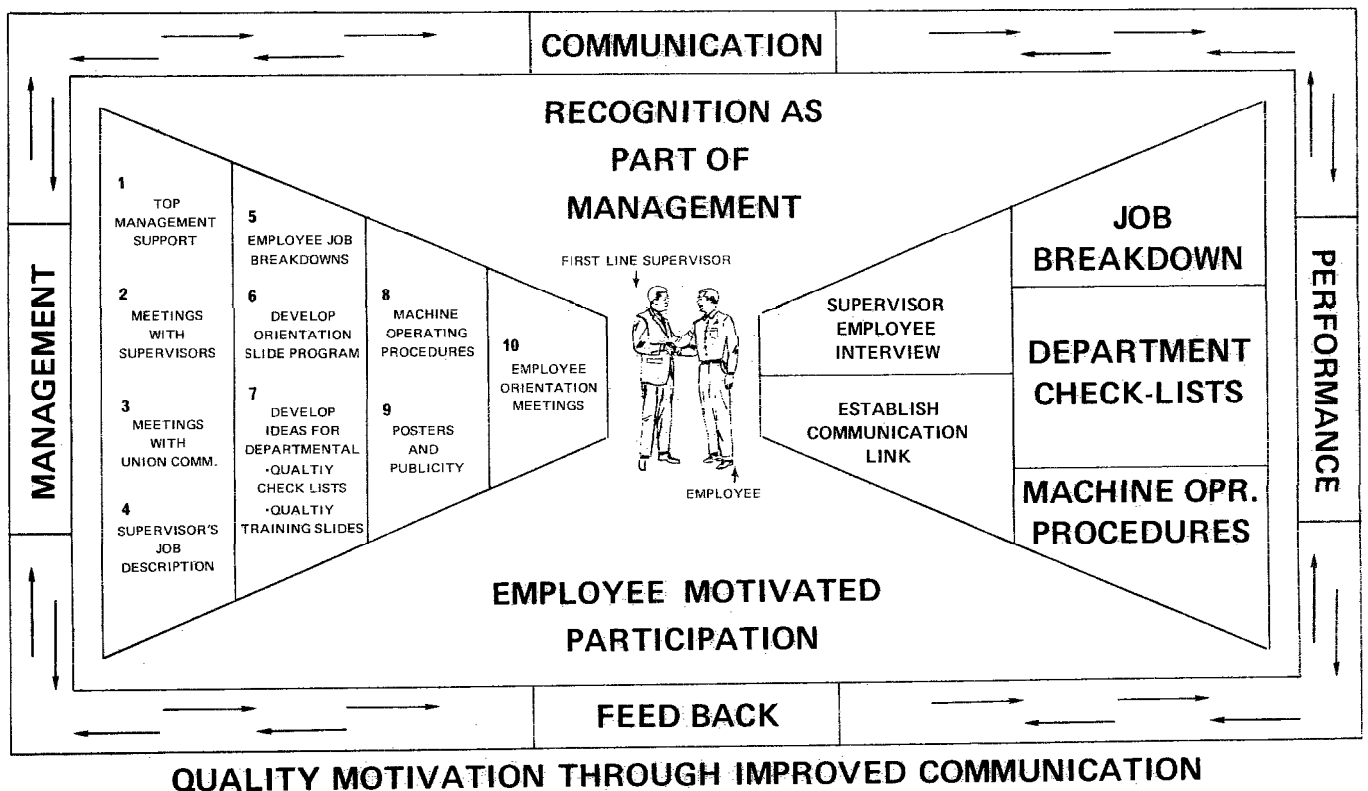
3. **Meetings with Union Committees:** Meetings with union committees have general communications purposes similar to those with the supervisors. Content would vary according to the individual company circumstances.

NOTE: Though not listed as a separate step, some announcement should go to the employees at this early period to prevent any doubts or confusion about what the process is for.

4. **Supervisor's Job Descriptions:** Beam's experience at Gerber has shown that some kind of job definition or job guideline for supervisors is essential and it should include a responsibility for training. The workshop gives some valuable help on this.

5. **Job Breakdowns for Employees:** Like the job guidelines for supervisors, it has been shown that employees too need some kind of job definition or guide.
6. **Develop Orientation Slide Program:** The orientation slide program is one of the most important elements both for confirming top management support and for setting the stage for the face-to-face interviews between the supervisor and his employees.
7. **Develop Ideas for Departmental Quality Checklists and Quality Training Slides:** How to go about establishing Quality Checklists, Safety Checklists and other important checklists is another function of the workshop
8. **Machine Operating Procedures:** Establishing or reviewing machine operating procedures is demonstrated.

Figure 1. Albion Quality Motivation Process



9. **Posters and Publicity:** Posters and publicity also get attention.
10. **Employee Orientation Meetings:** Scheduling orientation meetings for all employees is the final preparation step before the supervisor-employee interviews begin. It is one of the single most important preparation steps in the total process.

WHAT IS THE WORKSHOP?

Albion's Continuing Education Center conducts a three-day motivation workshop several times per year so organizations and companies can learn this process.

First, a behavioral scientist builds the foundation on the fundamentals of motivation. Then the workshop develops the practical application of these fundamentals.

This workshop's two-fold purpose is (1) to demonstrate the practical motivation program and (2) to provide the training for organization personnel so they can train their own people to use this method. It represents basically the knowhow of Albion College, Gerber and other companies.

Generally a company enrolls a team numbering anywhere from three to seven. A company team usually includes someone from top management, from the quality assurance or quality control, and from production. Naturally, team membership varies and frequently includes someone from personnel or other service departments.

ANOTHER FORM OF ZERO DEFECTS?

The answer is a no. The one thing the Albion Motivation process has in com-

mon with Zero Defects is the desire for improved quality; otherwise the two programs are quite different. The Albion process promises no tangible awards or financial rewards, though some form of reward for continued quality is emphasized to insure long-term benefits. How this will be done is left in the hands of a particular company's management.

Thus, a company which already has some form of the Zero Defects program might, if they wished, continue to use their Zero Defects Program and *add* the Albion Employee Motivation Process as a method of providing new zest, spirit and interest in quality performance. Other companies that use some form of the Scanlon Plan likewise have a built-in reward system which could be tied into the Albion Employee Motivation Process.

ADJUNCT MEMBERS APPOINTED TO ASTD BOARD

Three adjunct members have been added to the Board of Directors of ASTD. Their purpose is to provide fresh viewpoints and make the board more representative of the total ASTD membership.

These adjunct members attend board meetings and vote, but do not hold elected offices as do other board members. The three adjunct members are Roy J. Jones, Washington, D.C.; Inez C. Lauderback, Omaha, Neb.; and Glenn M. Parker, Trenton, N.J.

At Howard University, Mr. Jones serves as director of the Center for Community Studies and assistant dean of the

Graduate School. He is also president of Social Systems Intervention, Inc.

Inez C. Lauderback is social and civic relations coordinator for Northern Natural Gas Company. During her 22 years with the company, Mrs. Lauderback has held various positions in training and in personnel.

As director of the New Jersey Community Action Training Institute, Inc., Mr. Parker provides training and materials services to agencies and people working in the war against poverty. He is also an instructor at Rutgers University Extension Division.