

Quality Circles

Introduction of the Concept

The purpose of this paper is to inform the reader about what a quality circle is and its many uses. "A quality circle is a small, voluntary group of employees and their supervisor(s), comprising a team of about 8 to 10 members from the same work area or department" (Russell, 647). Quality circles were first developed in the 1960s by a man named Kaoru Ishikawa in Japan (Russell, 648). The Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) were the ones who paid for the research that put the theories about behavior science and quality control together (Quality circles, 1).

Quality circles are useful because the members of the team are from the same workplace and face similar problems. This concept is a management tool that has many benefits for their own work environment. Some examples of those benefits are control and improvement of quality, more effective company communication, using employee problem solving capabilities, and more job involvement (Quality Circles, 1).

How to Use the Concept

In using the Quality circles concept there are three main parts to go through. The steps are identifying, analyzing, and solving quality-related issues (Russell, 648). After the quality circle is set up the next step would be to train the group. The training is to make sure all the voluntaries understand the order and meaning of the steps and how to go through them.

Following training is the first real step in the Quality circle process-problem identifying. At this step the members of the group are free to brainstorm about the

problems they face in the workplace. Within this brainstorming session there are no bad ideas. After the members have come up with everything they can think of they go through the list and analyze each problem individually.

This step of problem analysis is to look closer at one problem at a time and having everyone's input on how to solve it. This step involves opinions from the members and research. The opinions are important because the members in this group are the ones who are faced with the problems at hand. The research can help to show the member what the result or effect will be with the way they may choose to solve a problem. After they are done with the analysis and come up with the solution they have entered the next step.

The last step in quality circles is the solution. The members prepare how they intend to solve the problem that was first presented in the brainstorming. The solution is explained in how it works and what the solution results should be. Those results are then showed to the managers and group as a whole in a presentation type of meeting. The three steps of identifying, analyzing, and solving are all very important in completing the process of a quality circle (Russell, 648).

Examples Where the Concept is Used

Quality circles can be used by large business and small groups. One example of a large firm using this concept is Xerox. Xerox has an annual teamwork day and because of a past teamwork day they were able to prevent 6500 tons of waste from going to a landfill. Their solution at the time of seeing the problem with the amount of waste they were producing was a recycling program-which worked (Russell, 649).

United Airlines used quality circles to look at the problem of no-shows and sick leave problems. As a result of the employees analysis of the problem sick leave was cut by 17 percent which saved United Airlines \$18.2 millions in the first year (Russell, 650).

Quality circles have been used to help smaller group of people like Kimberly Oshiro. Kimberly used this concept to try and find out what caused road rage among her and her friends. From that quality circle they learned that speeding and tailgating were causes of road rage. As a group they learned to calm themselves while driving (Report, 3).

This concept has been shown to improve work productivity, save money and even to save lives. Xerox did a good thing by improving the world by making less waste. United Airlines increased productivity and saved money, which in the long run could have lowered fares. From Kimberly her life and the life's of her friends could be preventing road rage. Quality circles are a very powerful concept in the real world.

Where to get More Information about the Concept

Eric Digests online is a great place to find out more about quality circles. The web address is http://www.ed.gov/database/eric_digests/ed353008.html. On this web site it goes into great detail about what quality circles are. The site also covers ways that quality circles are utilized and gives examples of places that it can be used. Within those examples it shows how this concept is useful. The main reason this site is a good place to find additional information is because the site also covers some of the problems with quality circles.

Bibliography

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