

Arizona Electronics Manufacturer achieves AS 9100 and ISO 9001:2000
Registration with **ZERO** Nonconformance.

Congratulations!



www.mcdavisco.com

M.C. Davis Corporation, an electronics manufacturer to Honeywell and others is now registered to the AS9100 Aerospace and ISO 9001 International Quality Standards. The company delivers electronic components and assemblies to OEM, Military, and industrial customers. All team members were congratulated by management during a luncheon and received team member recognition. Sustaining Edge Solutions and the management team worked together on achieving this success and further trained and implemented a successful lean manufacturing plan.

In 2006, three of our client companies have received NO nonconformances during their initial registrar assessment audits!

Are you or do you know an organization looking to achieve operational and quality system excellence...

Contact us Today
888-572-9642
Email: walter.tighe@sustainingedge.com

Fine-Tuning Customer Satisfaction

ISO weighs in with a new series of guidelines.

A new series of ISO documents under development will focus on some of the processes organizations should use to address customer expectations, needs and satisfaction--as well as customers' problems. There are currently three documents in the emerging series:

- ISO/CD 10001, "Quality management --Customer satisfaction --Guidelines for codes of conduct"
- ISO 10002:2004, "Quality management--Customer satisfaction--Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations"
- ISO/CD 10003, "Quality management --Customer satisfaction --Guidelines for external resolution of customer disputes"

CD stands for "committee draft," which is one of the first stages of ISO's standard-development process. Two later stages, each with an international ballot, must be completed before the document can be approved as an international standard.

The projects to create these three documents were initiated by ISO/TC 176, the ISO committee concerned with quality management, due to requests for standards in these areas from the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy. The new standards don't provide guidelines on what a code of conduct should say or what types of resolutions are appropriate for customer complaints. Rather, they're intended to provide guidance to organizations for developing, maintaining and improving processes related to codes of conduct, complaints handling and external dispute resolution.

ISO 10002 provides guidance for organizations to create a complaints-handling process that's open to feedback, resolves complaints, and provides for analysis of complaints as an input to product and service improvement. ISO 9001 users will recognize that their standard requires a complaints-handling process. The guidance in ISO 10002 would be useful (but isn't mandatory) in setting up a complaints process to meet that requirement.

The other two standards in the series are still in the development process and aren't likely to be completed until late this year or early 2007.

Airline Price Doesn't Equate With Quality

According to consumers, the price of an airline ticket doesn't necessarily equate with the quality of the flight.

For the third consecutive year, Jet Blue Airways was ranked as the best-performing airline in the 2005 Airline Quality Rating study. The study examined consumer feedback from the 17 largest airlines; those that performed best were low-fare carriers. Following Jet Blue in the top five of the AQR are AirTran, Independence Air, Southwest and United.

The rating is conducted annually by the University of Nebraska at Omaha Aviation Institute and the W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University. It uses 15 elements important to consumers to judge the quality of airline services, such as baggage handling, on-time arrivals, and denied boarding and customer complaints.

While low-cost carriers fared well in the survey, researchers also found that consumer scores overall were the lowest they've been in five years. All of the carriers in the survey performed poorly in baggage handling, and just five of the 17 carriers had on-time boardings of more than 80 percent. Customer

complaints were 17-percent higher in 2005 than they were in 2004. The report also notes the following: SkyWest had the best on-time performance for 2005, Jet Blue had the lowest denied-boarding rate, AirTran had the best baggage-handling rates, and Southwest Airlines had the lowest consumer-complaint rate.

The ratings were as follows: Jet Blue, AirTran, Independence Air, Southwest, United, America West, Northwest, Continental, Alaska, American, ATA, Delta, SkyWest, American Eagle, US Airways, Comair and Atlantic Southeast.

Bridging the Credibility Gap

Author: Jim Clemmer

Too many managers have a giant credibility gap with the people they are charged with managing. Credibility is based on perceptions of trustworthiness, reliability and integrity. Yet, studies indicate that many employees just don't believe or trust their organizational leaders.

Just 53 percent "of employees believe the information they receive from senior management," according to Bruce Katcher, President of Discovery Surveys, a Massachusetts-based firm specializing in conducting employee opinion and customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups. He bases the figure on a review of the company's database of 30,000 respondents from 44 international companies.

Another survey of a cross-section of 1,000 working Americans in companies with at least 1,000 employees found that "only half of employees believe what their companies tell them -- and almost 20 per cent do not believe that their employers usually tell them the truth."

How do managers with a we/they attitude widen the credibility gap with the people they manage?

'Looking outside, instead of within'

Too often, managers fail to develop internal expertise, draw out the ideas of the people closest to the action, or systematically collect customer input from employees directly serving the customers. To make matters worse, managers then reveal their thinly disguised contempt for the lack of home-grown know-how by continually turning to outsiders for expertise and advice. Managers don't see employees as credible or worth investing in. Employees reciprocate.

'Not serving the servers'

Few employees directly serving customers can provide excellent service when they themselves can get only mediocre support from above. Ineffective processes, misaligned systems, internal conflict, bad communication, uncaring bosses, inadequate training, faulty feedback loops -- the list of factors that contributes to the credibility gap runs far too depressingly long in far too many organizations. Poorly served servers rarely produce well-served customers.

To make matters worse, as employee dissatisfaction rises and customer satisfaction falls, managers will try to fix employees through training, motivation programs, new technologies, management fads of the week, or coaching (read discipline). None of these really attack the credibility problem. Morale slides further as the we/they gap widens.

'Blame storming'

When things go wrong, weak managers too often try to fix the blame rather than the problem. They point fingers and lay guilt rather than take responsibility, seek out root causes of problems and fix them. Research has shown that the vast majority of defects, errors, service breakdowns and such originate in an organization's systems, processes or structure. Yet, many managers look to blame their people rather than their processes. They will, for example, implement performance appraisal systems to hold individual employees accountable for what are actually systemic shortfalls controlled by management. Such actions do nothing to foster trust.

'Confusing information and communication'

Information dumps are often e-mail or presentation monologues filled with factual reporting and impersonal language that talk at people. But trust and credibility are built more on emotions and feelings. They are issues of the heart, not the head. Bridge-building communication involves verbal, two-way dialogue that exchanges points of view, pays attention to what people have to say and connects their shared values and goals. Too many organizations are drowning in information while thirsting for communication.

'Open doors and closed minds'

Weak leaders don't like to be challenged or confront tough situations. They will proudly declare an open-door policy while actually dissuading any employees from walking through it. So people tiptoe around sensitive issues or keep their real opinions confined to huddled hallway discussions. The we/they gap widens as people stop having real conversations and start saying what's politically correct or what the boss wants to hear. Problems fester until they explode with devastating consequences.

'Avoiding feedback about themselves'

Managers with low credibility often don't realize that their declarations, promises and threats aren't believed and just pour more gasoline onto the fires of organizational cynicism. These managers don't seek honest and open feedback on their own behaviour. They delude themselves into believing that acquiescence is agreement. Then they bitterly complain about their employees' resistance to change and apathy for innovation and improvement. The we/they gap is everyone else's fault. There are no quick and easy ways to close credibility gaps. But here are some things that the strongest and most credible leaders do:

'Listen up'

Closing the credibility gap can be helped by developing regular -- at least annual, better more often -- processes to gauge real employee perceptions about their managers' level of leadership as well as other issues, including morale, obstacles to higher performance, pet peeves or key irritants. And then managers must pay attention to the findings and demonstrate real commitments to act on them. When actions speak louder than words, employees will have more reason to trust those above them.

'Reach across the great divide'

It's hard to build credibility from a cloistered office. So spend very little time there. Don't summon people to your quarters -- seek them out in theirs. Hold meetings in common rooms -- the more visible, the better -- and spend lots of time with employees on the front line as well as customers, suppliers and partners. Familiarity and informality brings people closer.

'Get their input'

Run a continuing series of breakfasts, lunches, town-hall meetings, shop-floor conferences and the like. Take this time to ask for feedback, concerns, and suggestions. Keep things informal. Openly share information and treat everyone as key partners. A simple question such as, "What's the dumbest thing we do around here?" can produce powerful insights. Then make use of what you hear. And make sure your employees know you are doing that.

'Run two-way meetings'

Many meetings widen credibility gaps between managers and employees because they are heavy on informing and light on communicating. Employees often see meetings as top-down, self-serving forums pushing management's goals, needs, and agenda.

Effective meetings engage all participants in open conversations identifying problems on both sides -- management and employees -- and then bring everyone together to solve them. This is where strong managers find out what's hindering the people on the frontlines of customer service and figure out how to better serve those servers.

'Stop trying to 'motivate''

Manipulating or "motivating" employees emphasizes and widens the gap with management. To motivate is to treat employees as children, rather than as partners working together to meet mutually rewarding goals -- a better workplace, happy customers and delighted shareholders.

'Be approachable'

Be very careful how you handle bad news or dissenting opinions. A wince, a sharp question or irritated body language can send powerful signals that you only want people to tell you good news or what they think you want to hear. If you often find that you're not told about problems until they have mushroomed into giant issues, that likely means approaching you is seen as high risk. Or it indicates that your credibility for taking proactive action is so low, no one bothers. In either case, you need to get unvarnished feedback through anonymous surveys, focus groups or interviews run by trusted third parties, or an insider who will tell you what people in your team are really saying.

'Be radical'

Don't just get out of your office, eliminate it -- especially if it's bigger and more private than those of the people in the organization you lead. Doing so would be an example of one courageous and dramatic step toward narrowing we/they gaps.

Management offices are too often powerful symbols of separation and hierarchy (not to mention useless overhead costs). It's so easy today to carry your office with you in your notebook computer, cell phone, BlackBerry, etc. Use whatever shared workspaces, cubicles, and meeting rooms are available. Hold most of your one-on-one discussions in the other person's workspace.

Quality Digest Survey Results:

Can Six Sigma be overused?

- Yes **72.3%**
- It depends **15.8%**
- No **11.9%**

Does Six Sigma lead to tunnel vision?

- Yes **43.8%**
- It depends **35.5%**
- No **20.7%**

Other comments included:

- "It depends on the individual, not Six Sigma tools or methodology."
- "It depends on the ultimate understanding that the movers and shakers for Six Sigma have within the company. One must always look at the whole picture and not just the immediate incident/report."
- "Users need to be careful not to focus too heavily on cost reduction and lose site of product quality. A certain amount of common sense and good judgement have to be applied to all projects."
- "We can get hung up on the financial returns projects and ignore the just-do-it projects."
- "Overused? No. Wrongly applied? Yes. Not every problem needs or lends itself to a DMAIC project. And tunnel vision, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder."