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Implementing Change... the first step

By Scott Playfair, President of P Squared Consulting

What is 99.9% Pure Quality?

In the US, it would mean:

- One hour of unsafe drinking water per month
- Two unsafe landings at O'Hare Airport each day
- 16,000 lost pieces of mail per hour
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions each year
- 500 incorrect surgical operations performed each week
- 22,000 checks deducted from the wrong account each hour
- Your heart fails to beat 32,000 times each year

Is 99.9% quality adequate?

The first step in developing a quality oriented, systems thinking culture is creating an environment in which **doing the right thing right, the first time**, becomes important. It begins by building quality *into* the product or service rather than inspecting it *out*. That begins by helping every employee develop the standard of excellence to make that a reality. Continuous improvement is real and not just an empty expression designed to get more from employees. Focus on the external customer is constant and measured. Actions are taken to improve outcomes. Employees are treated with respect for their knowledge and their ability to solve problems, and customers are asked for feedback.

The role of company leadership is critical. Management must implement the behaviors that reinforce their belief in the value of their people. This creates a climate that is designed to encourage thinking and questioning. This will sometimes require the courage to make radical changes. Success is totally dependent upon the commitment and leadership of top management.

Ensuring profitable growth requires that we examine current beliefs, values and strategies, to **see if there is a better way**. Managing with a systems thinking orientation prevents the building of department "silos". Rather than throwing problems over the wall for the next silo or department to handle, the focus is on improving the internal customer/ supplier links as a strategy to better serve the external customer and achieve a competitive advantage.

Under this new strategy, an old paradigm is broken: an organization is not greater than the sum of its parts. It is greater as a consequence of the cohesive interrelationships of its parts.

Every business activity is connected up-stream as well as down-stream. Everyone is dependent upon their internal and external suppliers to give them the input which allows them to do their job and to satisfy their internal and external customers. This is known as the customer/ supplier linkage and reflects how true and lasting strength can be created through building a strong chain. And just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so too is an organization's customer/ supplier linkage. It recognizes that solving one problem can create others if a leader's focus is too

narrow or if management fails to look at the longer term, larger picture – the system.

As the rules of competition change, **management must adapt** or risk being left in the shadow of a new industry leader. Adapting means changing. Eventually every business will need to change the way it conducts its business. The nature of business is being redefined and successful organizations adjust. **The question is not *whether to change, but how to change.***