IMPROVEMENT

COMPETENCE

KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

PLANNING AND STRATEGY

LEADERSHIP

CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION
AND QUALITY CULTURE

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Growth Potential

The revised ISO 10018:2020 can help organizations establish a quality culture and lay the groundwork for true workforce engagement | by John J. Guzik

Just the Facts

The revised standard ISO 10018:2020—Quality management—Guidance for people engagement *takes on the management of human resources and how organizations can nurture an organizational culture that encourages and inspires true engagement in the workplace.*

The standard is structured around six concepts: context of the organization and quality culture, leadership, planning and strategy, knowledge and awareness, competence and improvement.

The standard isn't a how-to document but is intended to be used to introduce organizations to the importance of people engagement and help organizations flourish through a culture of quality.

The newly released *ISO 10018:2020—Quality management—Guidance for people engagement*,[1] released in March, provides a different viewpoint on the traditional approach to people engagement. In the past, organizations and top management have looked continually for ways to make their people more engaged in the workplace.

In reality, that's a huge misconception. An organization or top management cannot make its people become what they don't want to be. It may make people do what it wants them to do, but for people to become truly engaged, it is a personally rooted choice.

This new standard provides guidelines on how an organization might build, develop, cultivate and nurture the kind of organizational culture that gives strength to the roots of people engagement. Unlike other standards that give direction on how to accomplish an end, ISO 10018 gives direction on how to develop the base to grow toward that desired end. Actually, having engaged people in the workplace depends on the choices of the people themselves.

The standard is divided into six active clauses, preceded by the expected scope, normative references, and terms and definitions. The six active clauses are:

1. Context of the organization and quality culture.
2. Leadership.
3. Planning and strategy.
4. Knowledge and awareness.
5. Competence.
6. Improvement.

Each of these clauses is subdivided into four subclauses that include considerations, links to ISO 9001 and other quality management standards and systems, possible action steps and potential benefits.

1. Context of the organization

The *Context of the organization and quality culture* clause is where the notion of quality culture is first unveiled in this standard, and references to ISO 9000:2015 are made in this discussion. It describes how culture can develop over time organically or be the result of a powerful leader.

In either case, it is a positive quality culture that sets the stage for people engagement to begin. This clause also gives rise to the impact that social media has on today's market. Customers have access to virtually every organization in the world. Negative media about a particular organization can have a damaging and, in some cases, even an irreparable effect.

Also, it's known that employees tend to distance themselves from organizations with a negative brand image, although they strongly support those with a positive one. Possible action steps are identified that can promote the establishment of a quality culture.

2. Leadership

Leadership sets the tone of the organization. Leadership determines the possible future state of an organization that does not yet exist. Management directs and controls the organization to meet those ends. In a successful organization, both entities must be effectively implemented. The typical components of leadership are described, as well as the typical attributes of effective leaders. The potential benefits of leadership include—but are not limited to—an engaged workforce, improved productivity and organizational agility.

3. Planning and strategy

In the *Planning and strategy* clause, it is noted at the outset that the vision must be clearly identified before the strategic direction of the organization is established. That being done, leadership and top management can design the strategy of the organization. It is recognized that the strategy typically develops over time.

In some cases, the vision and strategy can evolve due to changes in internal and external issues. When these occur, leadership and top management must align the organization to adjust to these changes. In doing so, a clear message is resonated throughout the organization and promotes people engagement, performance, productivity and satisfaction, among other benefits.

4. Knowledge and awareness

In the discussions presented in the *Knowledge and awareness* clause, the concept of improved individual performance is surfaced. After improved individual performance is achieved, information regarding that improved individual performance should be communicated throughout the organization to foster further improved performance in other people.

This improved individual performance, multiplied throughout the entire of the organization, only serves to grow overall organizational knowledge. Methods to enhance knowledge and awareness include communication, coaching and mentoring, motivating and nurturing. By using a structured approach to these action steps, the organization could see improved decision-making skills, sharing of effective solutions, growth, improved customer service and improved security of organizational knowledge.

5. Competence

Competence (per ISO 9000:2015) is "the ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results."[2] In a successful organization, the application of knowledge and skills enhances value for the organization and its customers, including potential internal issues, such as industrial and labor relations, and grievance handling. Training and development are critical for enhancing people engagement by promoting self-worth, which leads to a stronger connection to the organization's strategic direction.

In developing overall competence, an organization should consider the
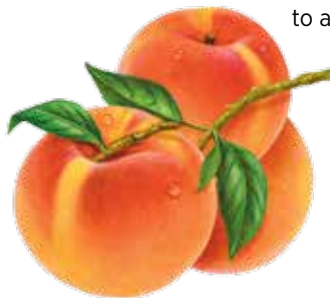
The standard emphasizes the softer tools and concepts that are necessary to encourage and develop people engagement.

level at which "quality" is presented. Is it a separate function? Or a part of every process? Training plans must drive people engagement as much as they drive organizational performance. Because in converse, people engagement drives organizational performance.

6. Improvement

Continual improvement of people engagement only serves to enhance the organization's agility in responding to internal and external changes that can affect the effectiveness of the quality management system (QMS) and the organization's strategic direction.

An organization's strategy typically will change over time. Any organization that does not grasp that is doomed. Internal and external issues will have a strong impact on that. If people engagement is leveraged when addressing these issues, the resultant impact typically includes an embellishment of the quality culture, innovative approaches to products, improved outcomes, reduced risks and enhanced opportunities.

People engagement

The concept of people engagement in an organization can provide benefits not only for the QMS but for all factors of the organization. When people engagement is nurtured, it feeds the further development of the organization's quality culture. When top management takes leadership actions in planning and strategy development, people engagement only grows, further affecting the quality culture.

By sharing and enhancing knowledge and awareness throughout the organization, while constantly seeking to improve the overall competence of the people, the organization itself flourishes through its quality culture. Ultimately, this drives the organization to become the supplier and employer of choice.

Softer tools and concepts

ISO 10018:2020—Quality management—Guidance for people engagement is not, and never was intended to be, a "how-to" manual. This must be done on an individual organization basis. It was intended to introduce the importance of people engagement to an organization on a more formal level.

This standard is not littered with the formal documents and records, and performance indicators that are called for in other quality management standards. Rather, it emphasizes the softer tools and concepts that are necessary to encourage and develop people engagement. **QP**

REFERENCES
1. International Organization for Standardization (ISO), *ISO 10018:2020—Quality management—Guidance for people engagement.*
2. ISO, *ISO 9000:2015—Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary.*

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