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# Quality Management and the Hidden “I” in Team

by **Todd Kolmodin**

GARDIEN SERVICES USA

Today, businesses of all types are jumping on the quality bandwagon. The more critical the product, the more the consumer/customer wishes the highest possible quality in the goods or services requested. Customers send surveys with buzzwords like ISO, QMS, and AVL for their suppliers to complete so they have confidence that what they receive is of the highest quality.

But what does all of this mean? ISO certifications such as ISO9001 are standards whereby a quality management system (QMS) is created so that products and/or services are produced in a repetitive manner that is monitored for effectiveness and continually improved. Surveys from customers to suppliers mainly consist of queries about whether the supplier has a QMS or attributes therein to satisfy their require-

ments. This allows the supplier to be placed on their approved vendor list (AVL). So with that said, suppliers create processes, manuals, work instructions and monitoring criteria for key performance indicators (KPIs). The entire QMS is then audited for effectiveness and adherence to the standard. The end result is that the supplier is certified.

A lot of work you think? It can be. However, what often happens is a company gets so wrapped up in creating all the necessary documentation, processes and monitoring criteria that they overlook the fundamental variable that is the most important factor in whether a QMS succeeds or fails: the individuals (“I”) that actually work with the QMS system every day.

Success of a QMS requires all systems to operate smoothly and correctly. However, even



though most quality systems encourage the team approach, when it comes right down to it, the hidden “I” in team plays a significant role in the success or failure. For example, all of the individual pieces of a process must work together for the desired outcome. In the case of a work instruction, an individual must perform those steps for success. Quality managers and quality staff prepare these instructions for the system but many times focus more on satisfying the standard without taking into account the people who will perform these tasks.

So here is where the hidden “I” emerges. For a successful QMS or any significant process to be successful, the individuals must buy into it. People performing the tasks in a process must feel they are part of the success. If operators fully understand the tasks they are doing and know what their contribution does for the overall success, they will be much more likely to pay close attention to what they are doing. If instructions are not clear (not successfully trained) or steps are monotonous (wasteful) the individual may

lose focus and deviate from the required steps. For a team to be successful the individuals must feel empowered on their own level, that they make a difference, and with their contributions to the team, the hidden “I” provides the foundation to a robust quality system with all integrated parts operating effectively.

To close, I’ll quote the Russian-American avionics engineer and inventor Igor Sikorsky: “The work of the individual still remains the spark that moves mankind ahead even more than teamwork.”

See you next month! **PCB**



**Todd Kolmodin** is the vice president of quality for Gardien Services USA, and an expert in electrical test and reliability issues. To read past columns, or to contact Kolmodin, [click here](#).

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## IMPACT Washington, D.C. 2016 — Preliminary Report

In mid-April, top management from IPC-member companies representing PCB, EMS, equipment and materials suppliers met in Washington at IMPACT Washington, D.C. (formerly, Capitol Hill Day). Congressional and executive branch leaders listened carefully



to IPC’s advice on how to best address the most pressing concerns of our industry.

This year, three issues were chosen by the IPC Government Relations committee to follow up on with members of Congress and staff. The agenda was limited so as to not dilute the message nor distract the intended audience.

Addressed at this IMPACT were:

- TSCA—The EPA’s interpretation of the Toxic Substances Control Act makes it more difficult to recycle chemicals like copper etchant than to simply treat and dispose. IPC’s argument: We want to do the right thing and recycle as much as possible.

Do you really want to discourage this?

- Workforce—New proposed regulations would significantly raise the baseline salary of those who can be considered exempt from federal overtime pay regulations, effectively making more

people eligible for overtime pay. The rule does not take into account the impact on workplace flexibility, career advancement and workplace efficiency. IPC wants to work with the Dept. of Labor towards a better solution.

- NNMI—the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation is a public-private partnership that draws on the resources of the federal government, local governments, universities, research institutes and industry to accelerate manufacturing innovation. IPC is urging full funding and long-term planning for the network of institutes of which IPC is a member of three.