

A Foundation Of Trust

by **Kimberly Kingsley**

After returning from a weekend getaway, Roy Kingsley, my father and president of Lynk Software, called me to talk about some ideas that inspired him while he was away.

While reflecting on his 30 plus years in the software business, he realized it took more than outstanding software for his customers to succeed. The organizations that experienced the highest suc-

cess rates with a new system did so with a wholehearted commitment from the entire staff.

He then realized the organizations that were able to rally this type of enthusiasm all had one thing in common—a positive work environment. He decided he wanted to do more than deliver quality software and technical support. He wanted to help his customers create a positive atmosphere in which their employees got excited about making the software implementation a success.

That's when he approached me and asked if I would be interested in collaborating with him on an article that outlined how his customers could create a positive climate that encouraged employees to participate in making the software an effective tool for increasing quality throughout the entire organization.

Thus our philosophy was born. It's called relational based quality, which teaches organizations how to build a foundation of trust with core values, human dignity and environmental consciousness as its base. It helps employees freely and enthusiastically deliver quality products and services.

Great organizations are born out of the effective application of universally understood basic values. The five underlying principles of relational based

In 50 Words Or Less

- **Organizations that adopt the five underlying principles of relational based quality will enhance their business processes, corporate strategies, employee development and customer relationships.**
- **Relational based quality is grounded in organizational integrity and offers a strategy for organizations to realize their full potential.**



quality offer clarity of purpose and a path by which any organization can achieve its own greatness:

1. Adopt a global perspective.
2. Invoke organizational integrity.
3. Apply core values.
4. Inspire leadership.
5. Embrace transformation.

Adopting these principles gives organizations a foundation on which to enhance their business processes, corporate strategies, employee development and customer relationships. While these principles have always been true, it is now more important than ever to embrace and deploy them.

Relational based quality is grounded in organizational integrity and offers a strategy for organizations to realize their full potential. Organizational integrity, based on a consistent application of core values, cultivates a synergy among employees, suppliers and customers. Understanding and applying these principles are the path to achieving quality now.

Principle One: Adopt a Global Perspective

One day a little boy, embarking on a weekend trip with his grandparents, anxiously stepped onto an airplane for the first time in his life. His grand-

father said, "Cowboy, sit by the window so you can see everything from the air."

The boy sat in wonderment as the plane took off. He looked around the plane and out the window with eyes as big as saucers. He didn't say a word as the plane ascended into the sky.

About 20 minutes into the flight, the boy's grandmother asked, "What do you think, dear?"

The boy replied, "It's nice, but how come the plane's not getting smaller?"

His grandparents laughed affectionately as they realized his perception came only from the ground.

The world started getting smaller when we saw the photograph the astronauts took of the earth during the United States' first trip to the moon. Until then, we acted as if we were separate from other countries. Then, as we looked at this picture of the earth over and over again, we began to collectively realize we are all living on the same magnificent planet. Since then, the Berlin Wall has been torn down, and slowly but surely, the invisible barriers between many other countries have been lowered.

The birth of the internet has made our shrinking globe even smaller and has connected us in a way that wasn't possible until now. PDAs, cell phones, e-mail and 24-hour news have all contributed to an increased global awareness and brought us to a new level of consciousness. We have more knowledge and more choices, and as a result, a small manufacturer in Detroit must now compete with its counterpart in Tokyo. We are literally living in a different world. This change is not a mere perception, as was the case with the little boy's view of the plane. It is reality.

The implications of these changes on organizational life are tremendous. We now know both small and large organizations operating from a global perspective can thrive. Whether we have embraced it or not, we are more connected than ever before. When we are aware of the reality of this connection, we act differently.

In a connected world, the boundaries that once divided us are more open and permeable. No one part is separate from the whole. When we act from this place of connectedness, we do the right thing for the right reasons with full knowledge that anything

short of the right thing will negatively influence the whole. This means more organizations are offering the highest quality of products and services possible because they have a genuine sense of responsibility to their employees, suppliers, customers and the world.

To respond to the rapidly changing global business environment, organizations must be lean and flexible while remaining firmly rooted in a solid base so as not to fly out of control with the first spring wind. We are at a point in the evolution of society where invoking our deepest values and using them as our guide are the only ways to thrive in business.

Relational based quality offers a way to build a bridge of integrity with all the people we relate to at work, while simultaneously developing a solid foundation upon which to successfully implement the more tangible quality systems that ensure safety and accountability.

Whether we're talking about customer complaint tracking or implementing safety standards, success is 100% dependent upon the state of mind of the person responsible for executing the task. Quality initiatives can be flawless in theory, but if the person in charge is dispirited or deflated due to an emotionally toxic work environment, the initiative will fail.

However, when we work from foundations of hope, commitment, enthusiasm and creativity—attributes that come to the surface when we trust those with whom we are working—we have the inner tools and state of mind necessary to achieve quality now.

Principle Two: Invoke Organizational Integrity

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying." This quote has never been more accurate than it is today. Nature is brilliant in its ability to evolve and adapt to changing environments. One way human beings have adapted to the uncertainty in today's world is by developing an intuitive ability to perceive the character and motivations of other people.

As a result of this heightened perception, employees and customers are drawn to organizations that do more than update their quality manual to com-

ply with the latest version of ISO 9000. We are attracted to organizations that are what they say they are—organizations that emanate their values. Character, of course, is not only perceived intuitively; it is demonstrated. Demonstration confirms our intuition.

Most organizations do not suffer from a lack of values. Our organizations are made up of good people, who for the most part, know good practices lead to success. The majority of us have good values and a strong sense of integrity. The challenge before us is not to get new values, but rather to focus on the values we already have.

Yes, it can be difficult to focus on our values when there are conditions rampant in the organization that distract us from consistently applying them. These unfavorable conditions that interfere with our integrity can range from pressure to make sales to poor morale. Without a clear focus, and in the midst of pressure, we experience decreased clarity in decision making.

It is in our nature to get distracted by work/life pressures, which is why committing to a clear set of values is so important. These values place focus where it belongs—on doing the right things for the right reasons. By magnifying our values, we can use them as a filter through which we view each decision.

Principle Three: Apply Core Values

It started with a promise. The CEO of a national bank, in collaboration with several of his colleagues, aspired to draw the bank's 17,000 employees into a corporate quality initiative that would result in significantly improved customer service. They developed a brand promise—a public commitment to their customers demonstrating their corporate values—in which each statement was based on a value:

- Be accountable for actions and performance.
- Demonstrate respect for customers and fellow employees.
- Provide exceptional attention, recognition and appreciation.

Did you notice there was no reference to profit? Each statement had to do with human dignity and respect—the essence of core values.

The brand promise was announced, published and distributed to employees as desk plaques to provide a daily reminder of the values they all

shared. The results exceeded everyone's expectations. Employee satisfaction is still growing, as is the bank's overall success as customers come back again and again for their regular dose of appreciation and respect.

To implement organizational integrity, the CEO and his colleagues followed these three steps:

1. Define.
2. Demonstrate.
3. Disseminate.

Organizations that follow these three steps will have the necessary foundation to provide relational based quality—quality from the inside out. It is a simple, yet profound, process. It does not require a

huge budget to implement organizational integrity. Instead, it takes complete commitment and the willingness to never waver from the core values. Once the commitment is in place, much of the process will come naturally.

Define: Whether the value is profit or honesty, every decision we make is based on a value. Prioritizing values in order of importance is the most critical part of the definition process. The values at the center, the core values, are nonnegotiable. By definition, integrity exists when core values are consistently upheld.

Core values, such as respect for employees, are different from periphery values, such as profit,

Integrity Mapping

Creating a list of your organization's values is a great start, but to truly benefit from the latent power contained in the values, you must activate them. Consistent reflection and application of core values build integrity.

Integrity mapping is a process designed to activate your organizational values.

1 Step one: Identification

Once your organization has a set of values in place, you must prioritize these values in order of importance. Identify the unchanging, nonnegotiable core values that are the basis of your organization.

2 Step two: Definition

Determine specific operating principles or best practices associated with each value. For example, if respect is one of your core values, an operating principle might be: Speak and listen to each employee in a manner that supports his or her dignity.

3 Step three: Dissemination and Commitment

Once the integrity map of core values and operating principles is complete, pass the information on to everyone in the organization. This dissemination process can occur through training, new employee orientation or printed materials. Have each employee agree to adhere to these operating principles at the time of dissemination.

4 Step four: Reflection and Feedback

Regularly reflect on these values to keep them alive or activated. You may need to adjust or add operating principles or refine the map as the organization evolves. In addition, encourage feedback from employees, supervisors and executive management to demonstrate commitment to the process.

An integrity map provides clear information as to the organization's philosophy and values, creating an environment where meaningful relationships are built on trust. Authentic empowerment, loyalty and high employee and customer satisfaction emerge from this simple, yet profound, process.

because they are centered on cultivating genuine human relationships. If you were talking with people you respect, you would likely agree certain values are nonnegotiable:

- **Self-expression:** Everyone has a right to express himself or herself and be heard.
- **Honesty:** Open communication and honesty are required to build trust.
- **Respect:** Human dignity is precious and must be preserved at all times.
- **Reliability:** Keeping commitments demonstrates integrity.
- **Discipline:** Consistent behavior gains the confidence of others.
- **Personal responsibility:** This means choosing to be aware of your thoughts, feelings and actions, and taking responsibility for how they affect yourself and others.

Demonstrate: Demonstrating core values is the vital link between conceptualization and dissemination. When the management team demonstrates to the rest of the organization that integrity is a priority above everything else, more than half the goal has been accomplished. The majority of employees will enthusiastically embrace organizational integrity if it is recognized as genuine. It cannot be a façade. If it ends up as just a piece of paper with some well-reasoned rhetoric, it will flop in a matter of seconds. Conversely, if the initial team, including the CEO, behaves according to the values defined, most everyone else will gladly join in.

Demonstration is the make it or break it element in this process. We demonstrate values by using them in our everyday interactions and decision making process. If you stay true to organizational integrity even when people aren't watching, it will spread like wildfire. If you apply it only when it's convenient, it will be extinguished just as fast.

Disseminate: Every person in the organization needs to hear, understand and remember the core values. This can be accomplished through printed statements, as the bank CEO chose, or through training and meetings. Lynk Software designed a four-step process called integrity mapping (see "Integrity Mapping" on p. 47), which takes an organization from conceptualization to dissemination to reflection and feedback. Whichever way is chosen, it needs to be continually discussed, taught and practiced.

Principle Four: Inspire Leadership

Relational based quality inspires leadership at every level by bringing out the leader in each person. In this model, true leaders lead without regard to title. They range from shipping clerks to CEOs. Today's definition of leadership is changing along with everything else.

Authority is no longer the defining factor of leadership. It is now respect. As we shift from being motivated by fear to being motivated by inspiration, we gravitate toward a new brand of leader—one who is driven not by another, but by core values. These people stand out. They radiate a force that speaks of integrity. We know they will do the right thing, and based on instinct alone, we know they can be trusted.

Relational based quality recognizes these people for the true leaders they are while encouraging others to do the same. In defining and talking about our core values, we make it not only acceptable, but desirable for everyone to be a leader.

Principle Five: Embrace Transformation

How do things look at this stage? As an organization, you have already identified your core values. The executive team has committed to demonstrate these values and do whatever it takes to support each member of the organization in his or her commitment to applying these values on a moment by moment basis.

A consistency has begun to emerge. Organizational integrity has started to take hold as each member of the team proudly rests on core values in every situation. Sometimes the situation involves a customer, other times a co-worker, supplier or manager. The same guiding principles apply to everyone affiliated with the organization.

Out of this consistency of application, a synergy will be born. As the organization vibrates in sync, a rhythm will start to emerge. This rhythm will flow into the world, resulting in exponential effects well beyond what a fractured organization could accomplish.

As the employees diligently continue to apply their core values every day, they begin to notice the following transformational effects taking place:

- People of like mind show up as employees, suppliers and customers.

- Seemingly random events that support the success of the organization appear in a synchronistic fashion.
- High levels of creativity emerge from employees who are now able to access both their hearts and their minds in the workplace.

In this world, like attracts like. We are naturally drawn to people with whom we resonate. If you are a highly ethical person, for example, you can spot a similar person fairly easily. Attraction also occurs in a practical way. Through this process of alignment, the reputation of the organization is magnified. People hear through the grapevine about companies and what they are doing.

To get to this point, we encourage all organizations to implement relational based quality as the foundation for all other quality initiatives. It will create a fertile environment for individuals to blossom, products to shine and services to glimmer.

NOTE

A longer version of this article can be downloaded at www.lynksoftware.com in the Executive Summary area.

KIMBERLY KINGSLEY is a self-employed consultant in Scottsdale, AZ, who focuses on organizational integrity and performance enhancement. She earned a master's degree in education counseling from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and is the author of *Opening to Life* (iUniverse, 2003).

**Please
comment**

If you would like to comment on this article, please post your remarks on the *Quality Progress* Discussion Board at www.asq.org, or e-mail them to editor@asq.org.

**QP
SERVICE
ARTICLES
SOUGHT**

Quality Progress is seeking articles about quality in the increasingly important service sector of the economy. Case studies and "how to" submissions are particularly popular with *QP* readers.

Articles should be 2,500 words or less and can be e-mailed to dnelsen@asq.org.

Go to www.asq.org/pub/qualityprogress/editorial for complete submission guidelines.



SIX SIGMA GREEN BELT TRAINING

Southbury, CT
May 2-6

Southfield, MI
May 16-20

SIX SIGMA BLACK BELT TRAINING

Southbury, CT
May 16-20 - Week One
June 13-17 - Week Two
July 18-22 - Week Three
August 22-26 - Week Four



**1-800-374-3818
www.xlp.com**

**Training & Consulting Solutions
for Business Process Improvement**

Visit us at booth #507 at the ASQ World Conference on Quality and Improvement