

CHAPTER 4

Obstacles, Hindrances, Problems and Solutions

Therefore is no surprise that the vast majority of the organizations do encounter problems in their quality improvement efforts and Harris Malaysia is no exception to this. Below are few problems faced by Harris Malaysia.

4.1 Fear of changes

One of the earlier problems faced by Harris Malaysia toward it aim to achieve continuous quality improvement was the fear of changes among it employees. This is because any change is disruptive and disturbing. Fear of change is usually based on ignorance of the objectives and benefits of the proposed change and/or on some misconception of what is entitled. Naturally, people are reluctant to make changes which they believe will affect their income, role, flexibility, responsibility, personal esteem and security of employment, which will also undermine their loyalty to traditions, policies and practices of yester year.

As a result, the employees also had resisted to change, in the earlier stage of TQM implementation. According to Mr. Stephen Nah, this was a normal situation. He said, "In due time, people had developed comfort zone. They like to stay in that comfort zone and to work at their own pace. They resisted to changes because changes required them to learn new things and acquired new skills. All these activities demand their time, effort, commitment and their thinking faculty. For the older generations, they found that it was difficult to grap the new idea and to learn new skills."

According to Mr. Stephen, Harris Malaysia had overcome this problem by making the employees realized that at the end of the day it was a survival issue. Through trainings,

seminars, individual and group discussions and meetings, the important to change for the company survival was conveyed to the employees.

Furthermore, Harris Malaysia had also ensured the employees that they would not be retrenched or forced to resign if there were excess of employees due to changes in the production process during TQM implementation.

4.2 Not ready on the part of middle-management

Some of the middle managers and supervisors were not involved in the initial decision on TQM implementation. Therefore, they were not prepared for their role in the quality improvement process. This was because the organization traditional environment and the individual's own experiences may had bred over the years a directive, dogmatic and non-participative management styles. However, the quality improvement process, which involved company-wide employee development, participation and teamwork in a variety of forms, requires that managers acquire the skills of planning, listening, encouraging participation and supporting new ideas. However, this participative behaviour is not really compatible with the normal leadership style of many managers and supervisors; the result was a severe credibility and self-image problem. Not only that, much of the effectiveness of the improvement process were lost because of middle managers and supervisors were not capable of functioning in their newly defined role.

Not only that there was an initial fear of giving up 'control' and letting other people make decisions, a significant problem, which could only be overcome with trust and a great deal of patience. The middle management crunch resulted in some managers feeling inadequate and lacking in authority until the matrix style of management has been

developed and they saw their roles changing and expanding into the other areas of the business.

Besides that, this problems of fear of change has been overcome through educating and informing the staff from time to time regarding the purpose, objectives and goals of TQM implementation. Training programmes such as leadership and facilitators programmes were provided to solve such problems.

4.3 Inadequate skills and resources

In the early stage of TQM implementation, Harris Malaysia also encountered a problem of inadequate skills and resources to facilitate quality improvement. According to Lascelles, D.M. and Dale, B.G. (1994, pp. 325), a planned programme of training and education in quality-related skills for all employees, including members of the senior management team, is an essential prerequisite for successful and permanent quality improvement.

Starting a quality improvement process with insufficient regard for the needs of the organization's skills base is likely to result in frustration and a lack of success because of the gap between awareness and capability. Harris Malaysia faced the same problem at the early stage TQM implementation. This was because they had established quality improvement teams without ensuring that the team members have adequate problem analysis and solving skills. Furthermore, they only selected personnels from the production floor to receive quality related skills training. Employees from functional departments such as human resources, finance, marketing and production control had not received such training. However, Harris Malaysia finally realized these and they had taken corrective-

actions such as having problem analysis and decision making courses to all their staff to improve the situation.

4.4 Quality management tools

The initial quality management tools and techniques training was too complex. Harris Malaysia embarked on deploying an array of quality management tools and techniques as part of its initial implementation of TQM. Individuals trained as quality appraisers used SPC in a number of areas as a means of ensuring various processes were within the quality conformance level.

Control charts were therefore widely used. Through pilot studies and project applications, it became apparent that more basic measurement techniques could be adopted with as much effects. Pareto analysis in conjunction with flowcharts and cause and effect diagrams, have been adopted in many processing areas as an effective means of enhancing improvement initiatives.

The training for improvement methodologies has therefore subsequently been revised to take account of the processing environment and levels of understanding within the processing areas. Techniques are now employed appropriately according to local needs rather than as a blanket approach throughout the organization.

4.5 "No time" response

Another problem faced by Harris Malaysia was the standard response in the form of "We have no time." The justification for this claim is made on an account of day-to-day "fire-fighting" which prevents any other than minor improvements being made; corrective action is taken by some people to mean sorting out non-conformances and complaints rather than preventing their occurrence.

There was little doubts that if activities were done 'right first time', then the perceived constraints on people's time would be less severe. However, this mental attitude among Harris Malaysia employees begun to change as the company made an effort to educate the employees regarding the important of TQM.

4.6 Difficulty of measurement

Some difficulties were experienced in deciding, taking and analyzing measurements in relation to the quality improvement process. Although, employees involvement in the suggestion scheme and in quality project has always been encouraging, actually quantifying the benefits of some of the initiatives has, on some occasions, been difficult. This has resulted in the improvement loop often being open-ended. That is, although some improvement initiatives have clearly been far-reaching, the context of the improvement has in some cases been isolated. The TQM Steering Committee is a forum in which suggestions are constantly reviewed in terms of the department's improvement goals and plans. The use of cost failure methodology has also enhanced this aspect of the improvement process.

4.7 Management expects results too soon

EIT, SIP and PMT were formed with the implementation of TQM. Management expectation on these teams achievements were very high. They had expected the teams to be self-directed within a couple of weeks. According to Mr. Stephen Nah, this was impossible to achieve. It usually takes two years for the teams to be self-directed.

However, the expectation from the management and the team members themselves had put the teams in a tremendous pressure. This had resulted in frustration and distress among the team members. To overcome this, Harris Malaysia had conducted

benchmarking on other companies to find out what were the time duration taken by them to implement certain activities and programmes. By having this information, it would also help Harris Malaysia to monitor the efficiency of the implementation activities.

4.8 Problem of sustaining TQM

It was hard to sustain TQM activities and programmes in the earlier stages of TQM implementation. This was because some employees perceived it as "flavour of mouth" and they gave half-heartedly toward the TQM activities and programmes. In order to avoid this, TQM Steering Committee has come out with a structure on how this TQM programme can be implemented successfully. Besides that, a systematic training programme and TQM assessment programme have been formed. Furthermore, Harris Malaysia has also provided the necessary facilities such as meeting rooms, tables and chairs to support TQM activities.

Not only that, Harris Malaysia has endeavoured to maintain an active programme of on-going initiatives to deliver winners and so encourage participation and commitment to the improvement process. Annual events such as plant-wide recognition dinners and a comprehensive system of recognition and reward helps augment the TQM success. Awards such as the semi-annual Award of Excellence (AOE) and the prestigious MD's Award are designed to reward team achievement while individual contribution is also recognized.

Annual events such as those outlined earlier were aimed at renewing the impetus while sustaining the direction of the TQM approach. At the same time, care has been taken to ensure that these events are not perceived as isolated initiatives but used more as an on-going opportunity to communicate the overall approach within an improvement architecture.

4.9 Problems with suppliers

Another problem of TQM implementation was many suppliers appeared to be complacent about customer satisfaction. A large number of organizations with whom Harris Malaysia have conducted auditing failed to have adequate quantitative and proactive measures (e.g. a customer satisfaction index) of how well they are satisfying their customer needs and expectations. They make customers think, an attitude of "no new is good news" still appears to be the norm.

Therefore, to encounter these problems, Harris Malaysia has taken efforts to educate the suppliers through Suppliers Partnership Programme. Besides that, non-conformance suppliers had been taken off from the list of "preferred suppliers list."

4.10 Hasty initial introduction

The initial introduction of TQM was done rapidly. This approach was taken to give impetus to the process and jolt people into action. However, the approach left gaps in people's understanding of quality improvement. These gaps have been addressed through an improved training plan. Training initiatives have been tailored much more to Harris Malaysia particular needs. The "Quality Commitment", "TQM Introduction Programme" and workshops and further communication sessions have all aimed to developed an appreciation of adopting continuous improvement as an overall management approach. Using in-house examples and illustrations of such issues as internal customer/supplier awareness and cost of failure, the pitch and relevance of the sessions have ensured that they have identified new improvement opportunities while focuses on improving customer service, reducing costs and ensuring delivery of a quality service through reducing internal errors.

4.11 Imbalance between recognition and rewards

In the early stage of TQM implementation, there was not enough achievement recognition and rewards from the management. Even if there were rewards, these rewards were mainly given to individual efforts rather than team efforts. Therefore, this had somehow hampered the progress of TQM implementation.

However, according to Mr. Stephen Nah, this situation had changed. There are much rewards and recognitions now than when TQM just started. "This is because the management has recognized that rewards and recognitions are two powerful tools to sustain and motivate the employees toward achieving the company's goals and objectives. We even have Spot Award in the form of cash. This reward is given to individuals or teams who did something good and worthy of commendation. Other awards are such Award of Excellence, Project Completion Award and Cake Cutting Ceremony," said Mr. Stephen Nah.