

COMMUNICATION RELATED DIMENSIONS OF TQM FROM THE POINT OF MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION VIEW

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Abstract

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy leading the enterprise management process through customer-driven approach. TQM from the point of marketing management is the satisfaction degree of customers from the goods and services they consumed. According to modern marketing approach, TQM is a complementary management philosophy that enhances communication quality with customers. TQM addresses the maximum customer satisfaction level targeting zero defects in every phase of operations. According to quality-based definitions because the customers determine the quality level, communication with the customers of the enterprise must be continuous. Because of this, communication in TQM has a process feature and communication related dimensions of TQM have been explored in this study. To enable a successful communication in TQM, messages should be encoded for receivers to easily perceive.

Keywords: Total Quality Management (TQM), communication, marketing, customer satisfaction.

Özet

Toplam kalite yönetimi (TKY), işletme yönetimi sürecine müşteri odaklı bir anlayışla yön veren bir yönetim felsefesidir. Pazarlama yönetimi açısından toplam kalite kavramı, tüketicilerin satın aldıkları mal ve hizmetlerden elde ettikleri memnuniyet düzeyini göstermektedir. Çağdaş pazarlama anlayışına göre, toplam kalite yaklaşımı müşteri ile olan ilişki kalitesini artıran bir bütünsel yönetim felsefesidir. Toplam kalite yönetimi, müşteri merkezli bir anlayışla, her aşamada sıfır hatayı hedefleyerek müşteri memnuniyetini en üst düzeye çıkarmak anlamına gelmektedir. Kalite yönlü görüşe göre, kalite seviyesini müşteriler belirlemekte olduğu için işletmenin müşterileri ile olan iletişimini en üst düzeyde tutmak gerekmektedir. Bu yüzden de toplam kalite yönetiminde iletişim bir süreç olma özelliğine sahiptir. Bir süreç olarak iletişimin bu özelliği, toplam

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kalite yönetimi içerisinde iletişimin farklı boyutlarının incelenme zorunluluğunu da beraberinde getirmektedir. Sonuç olarak, toplam kalite yönetiminde başarılı bir iletişimi gerçekleştirebilmek için, mesajın alıcılar tarafından kolaylıkla anlaşılabilir bir biçimde hazırlanması gerektiği hiçbir zaman gözlerden uzak tutulmamalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplam kalite yönetimi (TKY), iletişim, pazarlama, müşteri tatmini.

I. Introduction

Companies today have no choice but to adopt quality concepts if they want to stay in the race. In total quality management (TQM), quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy implied needs (Boaden, 1997: 153). TQM results in greater customer satisfaction while at the same time building strong customer loyalty, enhancing strong relationships with suppliers and in turn, increased profitability. Thus, TQM generates appropriate environment for implementing value-based marketing. Through the efficiency gained by TQM in the organizations, it is provided to increase product and service quality while at the same time enhancing relationships with the customer. Another ultimate result of this efficiency is the reduced costs. Overall, the company improves the delivery of customer value, because the TQ is the key to creating customer value and satisfaction (Douglas, William, 2001: 158). However, communication has a major role in the success of TQ implications. As it is considered the common goal of marketing and TQM is the customer satisfaction, in this goal to be achieved the determinant factor is the communication quality developed with the target group.

II. Conceptual Framework of TQM Philosophy And Its Basic Features

TQM philosophy focuses on meeting the customer requirements, requirements must be met first time and every time, and seeks for continuous improvement (Mehra, Hoffman and Sirias, 2001: 855-857). Improving quality involves learning ways to “do things right the first time” since quality is not inspected in, it must be designed in. Therefore, the aim is to achieve the quality required by customers even at the design stage as in the marketing concept. At this point we can see that in a sense TQM benefits from the interaction process resulting from the communication process. In other words, management obtains the same

quality required by customers by the means of creating a two-way communication with the customer group targeted by marketing activities.

When the process is expressed more clearly, it can be stated that the customer requirements is identified in a systematic way and is converted into technical features. As a result, TQM realizes the delivery principles of high quality, low cost, on-time delivery and shorter delivery times by using the communication process both inside and outside the organization (Dahlgaard, Kristensen and Kanji, 1998: 26).

The primary concerns in the implementation stage of TQM philosophy can be expressed as:

- Total Quality (TQ) concept should be accepted as the basic management concept and should be considered as a long-term concept.
- A modern and technical organization culture should be established.
- Organization goals, which are continuously evolved and renewed by the effective use of communication channels, should be transferred to the whole organization.
- The necessary environment should be provided for the personnel to use their creative abilities to increase organization's quality.
- Quality can be delivered only when all employees are committed to quality and motivated and trained to deliver it. So, it should be ensured that all the personnel would commit to TQ concept.
- Rather than reactive communication proactive communication culture should be accepted in the organizations (Detert, Schroeder and Mauriel, 2000: 850).
- Employees should be taught to overcome through persuasive communication instead of being reactive in communication with customers against their demands (Skutski, 1992: 32).
- Necessary steps should be taken in order to increase the motivation, to increase the knowledge and capability levels and to strengthen the sense of loyalty to job.
- Due importance and sensitivity should be guaranteed for the quality and process development staffs.

III. TQM From the Point Of Marketing And Customer Satisfaction View

TQM from the viewpoint of marketing management is defined as the satisfaction degree of a customer from a product. As per modern marketing approach TQM is measured by comparison of a product's existing performance with customer's expected performance before the consumption. In manufacturing-based approach quality is viewed as superior product/service offering. But in 21st century's customer-oriented marketing approach quality means customer satisfaction (Ross, 1999: 229). According to quality-based definitions satisfaction depends on exceeding customer expectations rather than just meeting the expectations. In TQM, like in the new marketing approach, company's first task is to satisfy its customers delivering consistently higher quality. It shouldn't be forgotten that quality is defined as conformance to requirements when customer's well being is taken into consideration. In real, it could be thought that TQ is one of the methods of realizing modern marketing approach and customer satisfaction. So, TQM addresses to get customers involved in the early stages of product design through their feedback. The importance should always be given to TQM philosophy as a result of modern marketing approach since it involves the improvement process in every phase of marketing activities starting from the product design before production, during the production and sales and after sales. This approach later left its place to continuous improvement. In TQM approach, business begins with a customer focus and ends with customer satisfaction (George, Weimerskirch, 1994: 46). A company has achieved TQ only when its products/services meet or exceed customer expectations because customer satisfaction drives the business in TQM approach.

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a contemporary management concept that must be built into production at all stages starting from the determination of consumer requirements and expectations before the delivery of goods and services during the delivery of goods and services and after-delivery services (Kuratko, Goodale and Hornsby, 2001: 293). In marketing approach TQM is also expressed as a management philosophy aiming at effective management of all processes that ensures

the satisfaction of customers with maximum quality and in most economic way.

TQM concept, aside from the other traditional quality and management concepts, does not only targets providing the highest quality but also considers eliminating problems at every stages in processes and minimization of the costs through the implementation rather than simply controlling the quality of outputs (Gordon, 2002: 86). Eliminating problems, in other words, reducing defects and errors is an operation principle considering the determination of analysis related to the demand before production, achieving zero defects throughout the production process, implementation of physical supply and distribution activities with minimum cost and high quality, perfect and flawless fulfillment of services after the delivery of goods.

Considering human factor as the focal point of all business activities is another important feature of TQM philosophy that distinguishes it from the traditional management concepts (Zhang, 2000: 129). Put it differently, TQM concept is the consequence of systems approach, which owes its existence to the individuals and groups in the business, human factors serving outside the business and activities of the consumers in the target market. This systems approach especially takes the satisfaction of customers into account on which marketing focuses, including all the people in the mentioned activities above. Thus, organization's marketing function strengthens its customer-driven characteristics owing to TQM (Fazel, 2003: 59).

TQM concept perceives human activities as the cause of its existence and as a result of this feature it has a great integrity with the communication concept taking its roots from human resource in the same way. Communication concept is born within the life dynamics and has gained its present meaning and position in the historical evolution process of humanity. In these early years of 21st century both the communication concept and management concept have been intensively influenced by the technological and scientific revolutions. These two concepts are being inseparable components of efficiency and utility along a chain from pre-production to after-production, consumption and after-consumption in information society.

IV. Communication Related Dimensions Of TQM

Communication from the viewpoint of TQM concept; is the stability process of bringing symbols and meanings to a common structure in all organization units in which TQM philosophy is applied together with the interaction and sharing of encoded knowledge, feelings and thoughts having the quality objectives from the viewpoint of people in the organization, out of the organization and in the target group. As a result of this process it can be observed that the knowledge, thought, feeling, attitude and behavior patterns of individuals organized under TQM philosophy are shared among these individuals through communication and interaction (Bisgaard, 2000: 295).

In TQM communication is explained as all of the information efforts required by an enterprise to attain its goals. Corporate communication incorporates the communication of an organization's identity and its inherent values to its target group in order to maintain quality vision for the organization. So, communication in organizations helps to define who the company is, what the company's missions and visions are and the reasons why the customers prefer the company. In this process, satisfaction of the target group by the communication process conducted by the organization will depend on the quality of communication. It shouldn't be forgotten that fundamental existence reasons of organizations are the customers to whom they render services and offer products. Organizations will be successful in their TQM efforts as long as they satisfy their customers with the quality of communication they have established. Therefore, an organization's success in TQM is evaluated based on its capability to manage the quality of communication when communicating its activities to its target group.

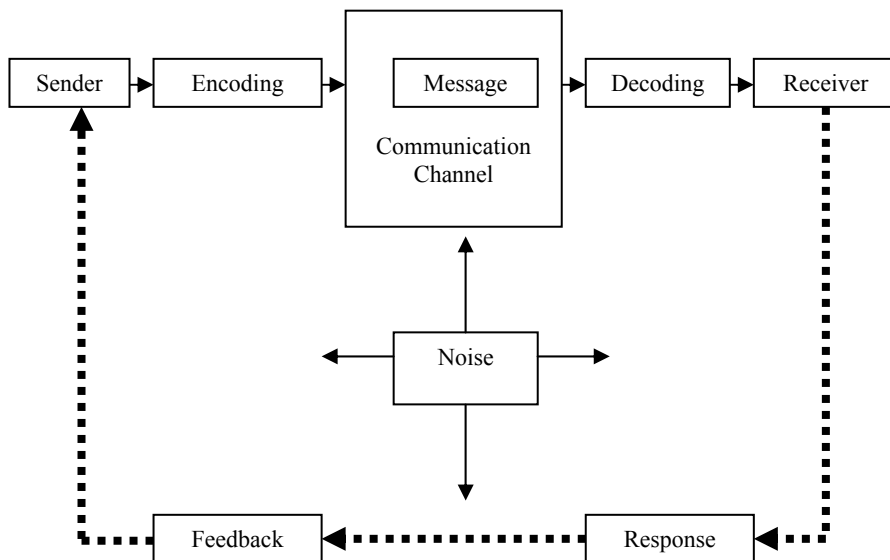
IV. 1. The Usage Of Communication Model in Customer-Driven TQM Approach

According to the communication model, guidance of consumer requirements to the quality characteristics and level should be considered as the response of receivers to the message of source (Duncan, Moriarty, 1998: 1-2). One-way communication with target group in management level could be meaningless for the receivers. But since TQM philosophy is a customer-driven approach, the management as a source will perceive the message from the target group and then will rearrange new messages

for target customers by considering these warnings received by that feedback and will provide an effective communication (Kikoski, 1999: 301). From this point of view, satisfactory quality degree intended by organization will increase its power and level by the influence of implemented communication model (Figure 1).

In one-way communication source, namely organization, just sends message to the target group, namely customer, doesn't control if it is received and disregards the feedback if there is any. But in two-way communication organization perceives the feedback of customers and forms its messages aimed at customer satisfaction by rearranging these feedbacks as a criterion. This feedback process also enables the management to control itself. Two-way communication with target group in quality expansion process will ensure the determination of design approach in R&D operations by considering the customer expectations and company goals and implementation of right tools for these expectations and goals. This, in turn, provides capability level to produce new goods, capability level to sell these goods and capability level to meet the customer expectations.

Figure 1. Communication Model In TQM



Source: Adapted from Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong (2004). **Principles of Marketing**, Tenth Edition, Prentice-Hall, Inc., p.471.

IV. 2. Complementary Role of Communication in TQM

When we look at the various dimensions of communication we see that human-human, human-nature, human-machine, and human-society communications are the main ones. Management's perfect and complete implementation of its functions in TQM is related to being successful in mentioned communication dimensions.

The analysis of quality process concept related to communication concept means the observation of interaction elements among employees, groups and customers (Peters, 1990: 22). Dependent on communication process, "source – message – communication channel – receiver" model reveals the analysis of behavior of human factor in the observation of communication. If the aim of TQM is generally defined as changing the human behavior as a result of quality approach then we should consider the processes leading to these changes.

So behavioral viewpoint of focusing on interaction of human resources in TQM indicates that the reality of quality goal's fulfillment as a whole should always be taken into consideration (Hahn, Bart, 2003: 181). Here the most important advantage of communication process is that it enables all the efforts to be in accordance and in coordination with organization's mission (Howard, 2002: 5). The major risk of conflicting situation lacking the compatibility and coordination of the activities is the reality that interdependence between the manager and receiver in the communication may have a destructive effect on the system.

Continuously improving and changing quality fact has become a crucial element for the enterprises struggling for existence in global competition environment (Daniels, Radebaugh and Sullivan, 2002: 13-14). The reason of continuous improvement in quality is the need of always being the first among the competitors. Main TQM approaches meeting these needs are "Zero Defect", "Just-In-Time Production", "Lean Production" and "Kaizen Philosophy" that are defined as continuous improvement. In traditional management improvement process depending on creativity or technological revolutions has been replaced in Kaizen philosophy by continuous, frequent, stable and maybe small but meaningful improvements and changes. Another point stressed in Kaizen philosophy is that the quality goal is not limited to product/service quality merely, the quality of whole system is important.

Another idea behind the success of TQM is “Zero Defect” method which stresses the delivery to be done on time and perfection to be achieved all along the management process. The same as in Kaizen philosophy, in Zero Defect method only the product or service’s perfection is not enough, it requires commitment to quality from all workers in all levels. Every individual or group must do its job perfectly at every stage of process. However, lean production process leads to a higher quality production utilizing less labor force and few methods. Lean production meets the requirements and expectations of target group by minimizing the factors such as losses and dissatisfaction of customers. This means that it has been an approach preparing conditions for TQM.

It is expressed that, the position of TQM approaches in communication process and the contents of messages sent by management are examined (Watson, 2001: 13). In this stage the message sent by management has two important points. First of these is the selection of thoughts and knowledge relating to TQ approach given in the message and the second is the processing method of this knowledge and thoughts. Thus, the messages should be sent to the workers in the organization and to the suppliers and elements affecting the factors such as service quality and cost outside the organization. The messages should be appropriately encoded for them. In this process the norms, culture and structure of the organization of which the receivers of the message are members will be considered and this will enable the message to be perceived completely and as intended by the recipient group. All TQ principles such as the product’s design, quality, features, the service’s quality and price, on time delivery should be encoded in order to be sent to the receiver, and then the message will become meaningful. The next step after this, is decoding of the message by receiver group inside and outside the organization. The main validity principle of this situation is the congruence of experiences and perceptions of both receiver group and management as the source. After target receiver group decodes the messages and the feedback is received then it can be said that the effects of communication have been realized which are supposed to be its outcome and purpose. The effectiveness of communication can be perceived as the developments emerging from the behaviors of individuals and groups inside and outside the organization (Andersen, 2001: 167). All these are based on the effectiveness of planned and

programmed messages sent by management taking TQ principles into account. Thus, the measure of effective communication applied by management is the realization of desired behavior changes in recipient group. These behavior changes are in general, the employees being more enthusiastic at fulfilling their functions with higher quality by using their creativity and energy. By this way the employees will do their job as it is their own business and increase their interest level, minimize the error level in the process and aim at increasing their productivity in order to produce better goods/services. The changes in the behaviors of employees desired by the management will occur in three stages as a result of directed communication action. These are the changes seen in employees' knowledge level, attitudes and behaviors respectively. The employees will not attempt to have a positive behavior until they have information about the new management philosophy. After the adoption of TQ information the employees will display positive manner to changes and behavior changes will follow this.

The ways of increasing power and effect of messages should be explored because they ensure the effectiveness of communication that is a crucial element in the success of TQM. For this purpose more than one communication channel should be used in order to be able to address more than one sense of receivers. Developments in communication technology that created our information society provide many opportunities in this direction (Schultz, 2001: p.13-14). For this reason, any technical opportunity provided by the latest developments in communication technology should be utilized; communication channels should be used to send meaningful and systematic messages. Quality communication process in the organizations can be defined as communication developed by organizations to satisfy target customers through eliminating inconsistent messages.

V. Conclusion

Customer satisfaction lies beneath the modern marketing and TQM implications. For customer-centered companies, customer satisfaction is both a goal and a major factor in company success. To the extent that the companies satisfy their target customers, they succeed in today's marketplace. That's why the communication between the organizations and their customers plays a key role. Companies are in need of

communication function more than before to satisfy ever-more demanding consumers in 21st century's fiercely competitive marketplace. Moreover, consumers are the major determinants in the market. So, the aim of TQM and communication functions during TQM is to satisfy customers. It shouldn't be forgotten that quality improvements are meaningful only when they are perceived by customers.

Communication in customer-oriented TQM is a process between senders' of message and the targeted receivers through the communication channels. Communication in TQM asks for to whom, what, how and who tries to transmit and how effective in transmitting that message. Communication model in TQM has five primary elements. These are encoding, decoding, response, feedback and noise. In this context, to implement a successful TQM, there is a necessity for customer-oriented TQ concept that begins with customer and continues with effective communication model.

TQM, playing a dynamic role in the structural transformation of organizations, is a management concept that causes an ideological revolution in all levels of organization from the top management to the employees. As marketing philosophy, TQM philosophy, starting from the determination of customers needs, aims at superior and continuously renewing high quality in the delivery of designed and developed goods and/or services and in after-delivery services not merely the quality of goods/services. The successful application of this TQM philosophy inside and outside the organization depends on the implementation of efficient communication process.

Communication action has doubtless priority in the implementation of TQM philosophy and to put this forward a sum of messages should be prepared by the management. But the communication, in the structure of participative democratic thought of TQM, is considered as a sharing and relation among the individuals in the organization rather than an effective factor on the receivers. Put it differently, the recipient group, internal and external to the organization is considered as an active participants not as a passive target group. Thus the communication process turns into mutual interaction from an insistent and prescriptive action. So, communication can be perceived as a tool used to change the organization.

When communication in TQM, accepted as social science branch, is perceived as a fact of culture it can lead organization culture to a reconstruction. In this context, in new customer-driven organization culture quality concept is not limited to the achievement of determined specifications in product. The product should be evaluated with regard to perceived quality criteria, which is the measure of capability to satisfy the customer expectations. Such a change in quality approach will emerge in a form corresponding to the mission and goal of top management in quality policy. Thus, quality system will be formed under the responsibility of quality guarantee, which will be able to provide quality required by customer as in the marketing activities.

Consequently, if it is necessary to state again that the communication in TQM has a process structure, the TQM based messages are identified by the management and sent by the management which has source position and reaches to the receivers through communication channels. There will be changes in quality perception of recipient group internal and external to the organization that received the message and as a result attitude and behavior changes will occur. Following this step, the feedback from the receiver group will be sent back to the management that can be used in correction of these messages. After this process, a continuous improvement concept improved by the unlimited human creativity will be able to survive in a dynamic structure. In our opinion, communication is a basic factor not only in successful TQ implications, but also in failed applications because of its absence or insufficiency.

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