

Achieve Total Quality

DAVID HUTCHINS

Director Books, Cambridge (Distributed by IFS International), 1992. ix + 197 pp. £29.95
ISBN 0 13 006057 7

This book is primarily aimed at those thinking of adopting a Total Quality approach to business. However, it is likely to appeal to anyone wanting to increase their understanding of TQ. The book stands out amongst the many books published on quality as being well written, interesting and informative. It contains new ideas even on topics that have been written about for years. Its 200 pages, consisting of nine chapters, a brief conclusion and three appendices, are packed with information. Those familiar with Juran's teachings will recognize some of the ideas in this book. Definitely a book to read.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss familiar topics of quality such as the meaning of quality, definitions of key terms and quality costs. Although these topics have been discussed many times before, Hutchins not only writes in a fresh appealing style, but manages to bring out new ideas. One such idea is the point that inferior performers lose out on two counts—once because they must reduce their prices in order to attract customers, and again because it costs them more to produce their products.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover, in varying detail, TQ success stories principally from Japan, but also from the UK. Success stories always make interesting reading when they are as succinct and well written as these. The gem for me was the story illustrating employee involvement. In a mine faced with closure, the management proposed to the staff that the mine become a spa. The staff enthusiastically accepted the idea, retrained and worked together to make it a huge success.

Chapter 5 discusses Statistical Process Control, using several interesting illustrative examples. Hutchins emphasizes that SPC is fundamental to Total Quality. His purpose in this book is to discuss the ideas of control charts, pareto analysis etc, and not to provide a 'how to' guide.

Chapter 6 discusses the requirement to empower people to improve quality. Hutchins bases much of his book on Quality Circles and suggests in this chapter that their main role is not just problem solving, but that they represent a totally new approach to managing and developing people, and business development. He also explains why 90% of Quality Circle programmes have failed in the UK.

Chapter 7 begins by confirming the need for systems such as ISO9000, but is damning in the way ISO9000 has been offered as the centre of TQ, and third party auditing has been presented as the answer to supplier appraisal.

Chapter 8 is a brief review of the elements of problem solving and, like his treatment of SPC, aims more at the philosophy of problem solving rather than the detail of how to brainstorm, or draw cause-effect diagrams etc.

The final chapter discusses how TQ could be implemented in a company.

The three appendices cover a brief history of TQ, TQ in the US, Japan, Europe and Singapore, and a self-assessment to enable organizations to determine how far down the route to TQ they are, and which areas need attention.

TIM STAPENHURST

The Practice of Operational Research

GEORGE MITCHELL

Wiley, Chichester, 1993. xvi + 235 pp. £24.95
ISBN 0 471 93982 X

A book on OR by the former head of Britain's best known OR group presents a tempting prospect. The author's details on the book cover tell us that for 15 years George Mitchell was head of a 100 strong OR group at British Coal (formerly the National Coal Board). With the recent changes in the coal industry and the transfer of the members of that group to a new