

## **Building a Solid Foundation for a Successful Quality Effort**

*By ATCEN*

Many organizations recognize the merits of quality. On the contrary, there are doubts and concerns on the success of quality efforts. In most instances, organizations implement quality initiatives for the sake of doing it, or just because their competitors are doing it.

In order to obtain the desired results in all quality efforts, the key is to build a solid foundation. The following elements contribute to the “ingredients” of such a solid foundation:

### **1. Customer Focus**

All quality efforts must be evolved around the customers. This is vital as quality is about satisfying customers’ needs; and customers here include both internal and external. By asking “Who is the customer?” and “What are the customers’ needs and expectations?” organizations are able to identify “what” they should be doing. The appropriate quality strategy can then be drawn up to meet those needs accordingly.

### **2. Quality as a Process**

Quality should be viewed as a process, not a program or project. It has a beginning and may require a long time to end. That is why some call it the “Quality Journey”. This journey requires persistence, continuous efforts and commitment.

### **3. Management’s Support and Commitment**

Quality has to begin from the top. Without strong and continuous support and commitment from the management, quality effort is unlikely to survive. This constitutes faith in believing that quality will produce positive results; and discipline adhering to procedures and processes.

### **4. Employees Buy In**

Inevitably employees buy in is crucial as they are the “internal customers”. They should be involved from the initial stage of the quality journey. There is also a need to creating awareness amongst employees through education and training. When the set objectives are achieved, employees who are involved directly in the quality effort should be given recognition. This will boost their morale and confidence to continue in the quality journey.

Some say that quality effort is a long pursuit, or a never ending journey. To a certain extent, I do agree. However in the efforts to making it a success, the fundamentals need to be established. The journey will only be worthwhile if a solid foundation is built right from the beginning.