



Lesson 6

The Enabling Environment

Introduction

The proper environment is critical to the transformation because it allows phase-one activities to flourish, and provides the basis for strategic management. **A TQL environment cannot be mandated**, it must develop over time as a result of everyday application. Although everyone in the organization plays a part, **the top leader and the ESC have a fundamental influence on shaping the environment.**

Efforts to build the environment can be divided into two areas--teaching the leader to walk the talk, and developing a climate that supports TQL. The TQL coordinator will play an important role in both of these areas

Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- **Describe the importance of creating an enabling environment for TQL implementation.**
- **Describe the characteristics of this environment.**
- **Assist the top leaders in creating the environment.**

“Try to understand culture, give it its due, and ask yourself how well you can begin to understand the culture in which you are embedded?”

E. Schein

The Environment

An environment is the circumstances and conditions that interact with and affect an organization. The environment is one of the keystones of the TQL transformation. As discussed in Lesson 1, (Change and Transformation), organizational transformation is the process of making fundamental changes to the strategies, design, and management of the organization. As the organization moves from its present state to a future state, through a series of activities focused on TQL implementation, the organization changes from the status quo to a new way of doing business. These changes affect all aspects of the organization, **particularly its environment or culture.**

Organizational culture has been defined as the assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors considered to be useful in dealing with external and internal environments. These assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors are encouraged, rewarded, and learned by organizational members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relationship to their work, their interactions with others, and to their view of the organization.

The culture of an organization is difficult to define, and is somewhat analogous to the personality of an individual. Any definable group with a shared history has a culture. In fact, there can be any number of subcultures within an organization; such as the different communities throughout the Department of the Navy.

Cultural change is an evolutionary process in which changing values, *reflected by action*, are spread throughout the organization until these new values are reflected through behavior, as the accepted way of conducting business. Leaders must understand the implications of current organizational status for the future transformation as they prepare and plan for TQL implementation. Leaders need to understand the current assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes that may inhibit or facilitate organizational change.

Characteristics of a Quality Environment

A quality environment may be characterized by open two-way communication, trust, and commitment from all members of an organization. Individuals are directed by a single-purpose and use data to guide them in making systems-oriented decisions. The process flow, not an organizational chart, describes the lines of communication and responsibility. Individuals working on teams cooperate vertically and horizontally to accomplish the aim of the organization. **The top leader is committed to continuous improvement and innovation.**

Yet, it is not possible to discuss one of these characteristics without discussing the others. Establishing two-way communication contributes to a better understanding of the organization, builds trust, and removes the need for micro-management. Where does all of this lead? To continuous improvement and innovation.

The education of the top leader and the ESC broadens their understanding of the TQL philosophy and the organization. By working as a team to apply this understanding, the ESC begins to develop valuable communication. Using pilot projects, top leaders demonstrate to the rest of the organization the true understanding which can come from a systems approach. They demonstrate how data-based decision making can apply to any process, and how teamwork across functional lines can work. The development of process improvement teams aids in the acceptance of the quality philosophy, and allowing the teams to function builds trust up and down the chain of command.

When Is the Environment Created?

Does the organization have to create the enabling environment before starting any of the other TQL implementation activities, or do other implementation efforts create the TQL environment? The answer to both questions is yes. In many ways, it is the environment that makes it possible for the other implementation activities to succeed. But, it is the success of these efforts that develops and perpetuates the enabling environment.

It will take time and the concerted efforts of the Top Leader, ESC, TQL coordinator, and other members of the critical mass. The TQL environment evolves slowly; it may take many years before many of the characteristics are encouraged and emerge.

The Challenge To Top Leaders:

- **Remove Impediments to Quality and Create an Enabling Environment.**

Transforming the organization may require dismantling some long-standing behaviors, **one habit at a time**. Organizations that have followed the traditional Western management philosophy have relied on the segregation of functional areas and competition to succeed. These philosophies have led to stove-piping and sub-optimization. Faced with artificial measures of success and this restrictive organizational structure, many managers have resorted to micro-management. With managers poking around in the workplace, fear drives people to provide only what is required when it is requested.

Senior leaders must work to remove impediments to an environment that allows people to do their job and managers to be able to trust their employees and the information they provide. Profound knowledge and the application of the 14 Points are some of the tools the ESC can use to accomplish this transformation.

“Actions Speak Louder Than Words”

The top leader's behaviors and attitudes have a primary influence on shaping the organization's environment. It is from the senior leader that all others take their cues. The top leader must begin to live the philosophy and take specific actions to implement TQL as they work to transform the organization.

The actions and attitudes of the senior leader will be closely watched as a sign of what is expected. **If the senior leader supports quality initiatives, then others may be sure to follow.** If the senior leader is not interested in quality initiatives, then the transformation from traditional management practices to TQL is not likely to happen.

The senior leader cannot transform the organization alone. The senior leader should work with the ESC members to develop a vision of where the organization should be going, and develop a plan for getting there. **The critical mass must be trained, and allowed to plan and carry out the changes.** If the senior leader is new to the organization the ESC should explain what they are doing, what they've done, and where the organization is heading. The ESC should show the new CO what they have gained from quality initiatives, and how the new CO can "make a mark" with quality.

Creating the Environment:

- **Start with the Top Leader and the ESC.**

It is commitment to change that allows the transformation to occur. However, positively influencing the organizational environment is the most difficult and elusive part of transforming the organization. The environment will not change without active commitment from the top leaders, and without the development of a critical mass.

Top leaders must serve as role models for behaviors and actions they desire in members of the critical mass. Leaders must set the stage for transformation, so that actions by organizational members can be congruent with desired behavior changes.

The Top Leader plays a critical role but it will be the ESC that will sustain the momentum when the leader leaves the organization. There are many actions it can begin to take which will make the transformation easier. In many respects, the actions taken will be on an individual level as role models, and on an organization-wide level in their official capacity as ESC members.

- **Acquire Profound Knowledge**

The ESC needs profound knowledge in order to lead the transformation. However, leaders preparing to implement TQL do not have to be experts in all aspects of profound knowledge. What is required is a basic understanding of each of the four parts and how they operate as a system. For the serious student the process of acquiring profound knowledge has a beginning, but should have no end.

- **Act as Role Models**

By living the philosophy, ESC members become the role models for subordinates to follow. Individual members will be expected to visibly demonstrate their commitment to TQL on a daily basis. There are many behaviors the top leaders can exhibit which will show their acceptance of the quality philosophy. The ESC must practice the Plan Do Check Act cycle by being open to bad news and letting the messengers through with the data needed to make decisions. Using a systems approach, the ESC must stop blaming people and accept the responsibility for the processes under its control

The ESC's actions to implement the 14 Points will allow others within the organization to become a part of the new philosophy, and will go a long way in creating a quality-focused environment.

- **Institute education and training initiatives**

The ESC can begin to create an enabling environment within the organization through education and training. Its support is critical to the success of the TQL training efforts. Additionally, the top leaders should personally participate in TQL training.

- **Perform an organizational assessment**

An organizational assessment provides information about the internal environment of the organization. The ESC can use this information to determine how people view the organization, their work, its mission, etc. The assessment provides a diagnosis of the organization's environment, revealing its strengths and weaknesses. This information can be used to plan changes to benefit the organization.

- **Remove impediments to change**

The top leaders and managers should remove impediments to organizational change. The ESC must work to break down the barriers between departments, and promote cooperation between functional areas. **A more cooperative environment can be established by removing incentives that breed competition, and by encouraging cross-functional communication throughout the organization.** A simple way to remove impediments to change is to ensure that members of the organization are provided with the methods and tools to accomplish their tasks.

- **Nurture process improvement**

The ESC helps create the environment by leading and supporting process management activities within the organization. They do this by selecting projects, chartering teams, providing resources, and aligning actions with the organization's mission and strategic intent. By observing and encouraging process improvement activities, the ESC can show its importance to them and to the organization.

The ESC must develop a means that is supportive of process improvement **by providing the needed resources, including materials, funding, space, people, and training.**

- **Take action**

All of the actions the ESC takes to implement TQL contribute to the enabling environment. This includes selecting, supporting, and participating in projects to remove impediments to change. As the top leaders participate in quality improvement activities, they send a loud and clear message to the organization about what is important to them, and on which activities organizational members must focus.

The TQL Coordinator and Culture:

The TQL coordinator plays a vital role in helping the top leaders create the environment in the organization. The TQL coordinator helps develop supportive behaviors in the top leaders, and assists the ESC in identifying and removing impediments to TQL. Specifically the TQL coordinator should;

- **Work with the Top Leaders**

There are many different ways that the TQL coordinator can work with top leaders to develop behaviors and attitudes supportive of TQL. The primary methods involve education, training, and assistance in TQL activities. **The role of TQL education and training for ESC members in creating the environment cannot be overstated.** Changing behaviors and attitudes requires understanding. Exposure to TQL concepts alone may begin to change the attitudes of some ESC members and motivate them to change their behaviors. But people do not learn in the same ways, nor do they learn at the same pace.

The TQL coordinator can demonstrate the value of TQL in many different ways: the didactic classroom approach, ESC team interaction, exercises, constructive feedback, examples of lessons learned, and participation in TQL activities.

- **Coordinate TQL education and training**

The TQL coordinator assists the ESC in developing the education and training plan and coordinates its implementation; ensures organization trainers are in place and properly trained; coordinates quotas for training external and internal to the organization; and acts as instructor for the ESC. The TQL coordinator also assigns quality advisors to process improvement teams, and oversees their work. All of these efforts broaden the knowledge of organization members, contribute to their TQL awareness, and increase the acceptance of TQL.

- **Publicize TQL activities**

The TQL coordinator also takes the lead in publicizing TQL initiatives to the organization and to external sources. The TQL coordinator may write and solicit articles on quality activities for an in-house TQL newsletter. They may also write, collect, and distribute lessons learned by using such vehicles as storyboards newsletters, POD notes, or posters.

- **Establish and maintain a TQL reference library**

The TQL coordinator should establish a TQL library, and provide reference material to the teams, as needed.

- **Network**

A TQL coordinator should participate in user groups, compare notes with TQL coordinators in other military organizations, and utilize available information. Any information gathered in these efforts should be shared with the ESC and the organization. The use of examples from the DoN or Marine Corps makes the philosophy more real to organizational members.

- **Walk the talk**

One of the most effective ways for a TQL coordinator to convince the ESC that TQL behaviors are appropriate, is to practice what they preach. Just as the organization will be looking to the ESC for guidance, the ESC will be looking to the TQL coordinator for suggestions. This will require an understanding and commitment to TQL. **The TQL coordinator must act as a proponent of TQL, and enthusiastically represent TQL to anyone who will listen.** The TQL coordinator must constantly seek ways to demonstrate how applying the principles of TQL will assist the organization in executing its mission.

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Summary

- The top leaders' actions and attitudes influence the environment.
- The top leaders must work to remove impediments to change.
- Leaders create a TQL enabling environment by acquiring profound knowledge, acting as role models, establishing the critical mass, and nurturing process improvements.

Reading

Schein, E. *Organizational Culture* American Psychologist February, (1990) pp. 109-119