

# Quality info

**Volume 24, Issue 23***Fortnightly, Free soft copy***1<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

## **Do You Know Where Your Quality Career Is Heading?**

How to transition from a certified quality professional to an expert in business management systems

The quality profession has been evolving since the Industrial Revolution. I've lived part of this journey since the 1970s and have experienced its effect. ASQ and other organizations have continually pushed the envelope in creating training and certifications in the skill sets we've developed over the decades. These initiatives have facilitated an improvement in overall defect levels combined with a steady decline in organizational risk. Unfortunately, the positive trends appear to have flattened during the last decade.

As the timeline below depicts, we've successfully matured by creating conformance and performance tools. In our experience, however, we've never had a unified mandate to evolve beyond conformance to business excellence. Regrettably, we've reached a virtual event horizon that could be correlated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Leading up to 2020, the number of ISO 9001 certifications had been dropping precipitously. The patina was also wearing off of Six Sigma. The reason was that neither scheme focused on the key process indicators (KPIs) of senior management. Coincidentally, CEOs and CFOs began to question the worth of these programs after years of believing they were process-improvement tools that materially benefited marketing their wares and services. Requirements by customers that their suppliers provide some form of quality certification have since diminished as more proactive supply-chain management systems have evolved.

Pharma and other life-safety industries had discovered that Six Sigma quality goals weren't sufficient to shield them from product liability. At the same time, the value of quality professionals and their tools was being questioned as Covid-19

hit and fundamentally changed our business landscape. This helped make traditional operational organizational models almost impossible to maintain.

Manufacturing operations downsized to skeleton workforces. Quality professionals were furloughed because they were sorted into the arbitrary category of “nonessential workers.” Operations management was looking at its shop floor processes, believing that quality was “built-in to the process steps,” and touch-labor technicians were key to ensuring quality if and when they followed these processes. Many of those quality jobs haven’t come back. The quality professionals who did survive in corporate environments had to find creative ways to justify their value. Consultants and auditors had to reinvent themselves to be of measurable value to their clients.

With the announcement that the ISO 9001:2015 revision wouldn’t be updated, the atrophy of quality systems management as we know it accelerated. If you’re not moving forward, you’re inherently moving backward. The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting radical changes to business models are permanent.

Recent articles on the future of quality management are little more than rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*. We need a bold new plan for the future of our profession. Our imperatives are:

- Quality and risk management must evolve to enterprisewide business process management and risk avoidance.
- Standards compliance must be integral to a culture of business excellence, not an exercise in demonstrating conformance.
- Quality initiatives must be profit centers, not overhead expenses.
- Quality policies must be replaced by living and shared visions, missions, and values.
- Quality professionals must retrain from a focus on their tool sets to pioneering enhanced business outcomes.

We need to fundamentally change how we contribute to the success of our businesses and advance our careers to new areas of expertise we likely haven’t realized existed. We must transition from quality management to organization

wide integrated process management, and evolve risk management into risk avoidance.

### **The transition from QMS to BMS**

The transition from a quality management system (QMS) to a business process management system (BMS) is a strategic decision for an organization to achieve enterprise wide excellence and risk avoidance. The potential benefits to a business of implementing a BMS are:

- The ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements
- Establishing a goal of 100-percent customer satisfaction
- Creating a goal that no defect ever reaches a customer
- The ability to demonstrate conformity to existing certification standards

The principles of BMS include:

- Vision: Create products and services of exceptional value.
- Mission: Create a sustainable and scalable organization that executes the vision created by the principals.
- Values: Success is the inevitable result of achieving the vision.
- Leadership: Enlightened visionaries who are great communicators and empower their employees to make proactive quality and safety decisions.
- Process: All activities are a series of interrelated processes.
- Boundaries: Everyone operates with an agreed-upon standard of accountability.
- Metrics: All business process decisions are based on comprehensive, measurable data.
- Consistency: Quality, reliability, value, timeliness, safety, and profit are all achieved concurrently.
- Achievement: Everyone wins. No exceptions. Society is enhanced by your people and your accomplishments.

Effective business process management also includes abandoning risk management and adopting risk avoidance as a fundamental tenet of an organization. Yes, these are sweeping changes to the paradigms we've considered sacred for generations. Evolving these tenets of quality management is, however, now a matter of survival. We also must pay for ourselves by making measurable improvements in the goals of our organization or consulting clients.

### **Skill sets**

The first goal in evolving our quality profession is to incorporate our training, experience, and certifications into the position description "master of quality deployment." This can be in a pseudo-resume format that validates quality professionals to successfully deploy and operate a QMS. Such an exercise will prepare them to transition to new quality roles within business management systems.

Whether you're a corporate quality manager, auditor, inspector, or consultant, you'll find a new vista of opportunities when you present yourself as a quality professional and not just a certified practitioner.

The second area of focus is making the transition from quality management to business process management. Every function within your organization is a series of interrelated processes that can be identified, measured, and improved, much like QMS processes. You will need to expand your role as a QMS expert to transition your sphere of influence to incorporate the entire company into a business management system environment. Creating a BMS is another level in your professional maturity.

Once you have mastered BMS transition, the next goal is to turn business process conformance into business process excellence. You can map an organization wide plan to remove opportunities for defects from each process and point the company in the direction of no defects ever reaching a customer.

Next is the transition from risk management and risk-based-thinking to risk avoidance. During my lengthy career in quality, for the last two decades I've primarily been contracted as an expert witness in products liability litigation. It's my experience that conventional risk management doesn't adequately prevent

catastrophic failures. The tools of risk avoidance include preventing defects from moving from one process step to the next while looking at the overall flow at the shop floor and then companywide levels. Learning to facilitate risk avoidance is another career opportunity awaiting you.

The fifth step is becoming a “master of business process forensics.” This can be the pinnacle of the quality profession as an overall expertise in business process excellence and risk avoidance. The term *forensic* is used because you’ll transition from a benign process auditor to a professional skilled in deep analysis to discover foreseeable risk and associated risk avoidance. Your new professional stature will garner the support of senior managers because you’ll be contributing to the company’s KPIs while keeping it free from customer complaints and civil liability.

Call to action

This is the first in a series of monthly columns that will explore the needed renaissance in our profession if we’re to grow and prosper, rather than stagnate with ISO 9001:2015. Each column will enable you to grow your skill set and marketability while learning business process management principles and their application.

Your current certifications and experience will become the tool kit to enhance your professional skills as you grow your professional stature, credibility, and relevance within your company.

Finally, there are others out there promoting business management systems. Their approaches appear to be that of turning quality professionals into organizational design experts. These skills aren’t relevant to us, and you should avoid jumping into this abyss unless you’re contemplating a complete career change.

As well as reading these articles, Kaizen Institute Online will be rolling out programs certified by Exemplar Global for this professional skills training.

Readers may please note that D. L. Shah Trust brings out two e-journals on a fortnightly basis. These are mailed to those persons or institutions who are desirous of receiving them:  
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1. Safety Info
2. Quality Info

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Published by : D. L. Shah Trust,  
Room No. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Gool Mansion, Homji  
Street, Mumbai 400 001  
email: [dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dlshahtrust@yahoo.co.in)  
Ph: 022-22672041  
Subscription: Free on request  
(soft copy only)

Edited by : Hari K Taneja, Trustee,  
D. L. Shah Trust  
email: [dlshahtrust@gmail.com](mailto:dlshahtrust@gmail.com)  
Phone: 022-2309 6529  
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