

MANUFACTURING NEWS

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The Best Practices Of Sales-Oriented Companies And Their Top Performing Sales People

Companies that have the best sales practices focus not so much on having sales people meet quotas, but on measuring the amount of activity they generate in terms of the number of letters they send out, or the number of telemarketing calls made. By setting "activity" goals and measuring these activities on a monthly basis, the best-in-class sales organizations "create their own benchmarks as to what the top performers were doing versus" mediocre sales people, says Ron Volper, president of the Ron Volper Group in White Plains, N.Y. "They don't focus just on results because results are history. Managers of non-sales driven companies spend too much time trying to coach the result, but you can't change the result. You can change the activity, however, which will generate more results."

Companies that have a strong focus on selling typically involve the sales function in the mission and strategy of the firm. Sales permeates these companies to such an extent that senior managers, including those outside the sales function such as the CEO, CIO, CFO and VP of manufacturing, make sales calls on a monthly basis. This sends a powerful message to the sales force that sales is king, "not the only king, but an important king," says Volper, whose clients

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The Quality Revolution Enters Phase Two With An Emphasis On Service & Markets

BY KRIS HERBST

The quality revolution is going stronger and working better than ever, yet there is a troubling "performance gap" between the large, leading-edge companies, and the smaller, more typical companies, says Curt Reimann, former director of the Baldrige National Quality Award at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

"Nationally, we have a long way to go to bring typical companies to anything close to the kind of performance we have seen in the top performers, such as the Baldrige Award winners," said Reimann, who is now working on the next phase of the quality revolution at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn., where he holds the Mayberry Chair of Excellence. "The best companies in the U.S. are improving their performance along some critical dimension at a rate that is five to 10 times faster than are the more typical companies."

As attention to quality has increased, the marketplace has become less and less forgiving of products or services that don't meet a high standard of quality. "My concern is that for many small- and medium-sized companies...we are not close to being there, although we are making faster progress than we were 10 years ago."

Reimann is also working with NIST's Manufacturing Extension Partnership program to spread new concepts in quality to smaller manufacturers throughout the country.

Companies that have been well-suited to long production runs must become more agile and flexible to meet increasing demands for customization and responsiveness to the market. "This represents the major challenges that quality now must address," Reimann said. Failure to close the performance gap raises the specter of U.S. companies losing business to foreign competitors

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