



Published each month by:

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*"We engineer the quality of your success"*

VOL. 96 No. J

Circulated to people interested in improving their products and processes

**Benchmarking Tip:**

**CHOOSE THE BEST-IN-CLASS COMPANIES THAT MEET YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS**

The following 3-step approach can help teams find benchmarking partners from which they can learn.

- Formulate criteria that define a "class" of companies of interest. Base this criteria on fundamental attributes, such as the companies' customer base, global presence, technical focus, quality maturity, or ask: "what critical attributes must a company have to be a credible benchmarking partner?"
- Define measures that can be used to compare companies to determine the "best" in class. These measures should be based on the team's Critical Success Factors. For example, "best" might be defined as the quickest response time, the most reliable products, the highest productivity, etc.
- Find companies that meet the team's class criteria and that appear to be the best performers relative to the defined measures. These are the team's best-in-class companies.

**Companies Need To Pay Attention To Employees**

A quality organization differs from most other organizations because one of its primary activities involves instilling a sense of belonging in all employees. They create a sense of belonging by recognizing that employees are important to their success.

Paying attention makes people feel worthwhile which motivates them to *want* to contribute. "Want" is perhaps the single most important factor in why most quality organizations are also high-performance organizations.

There is no single right way to pay attention to employees. There are, however, two important types of attention that provide profound results when put into action. One type of attention relates to the person; the other type relates to the person's activities.

At the most basic level, there must be a concern for employees -- that is, a belief that all employees are worthwhile and important. This kind of attention leads not only to an increase in employees' self-esteem but also eventually to an increase in productivity.

While it is important to make employees feel good, it doesn't necessarily pay the bills. Attention must also be paid to what employees do. The job they do must be seen as valuable. This requires that support and feedback be present in daily activities. Support and feedback tell employees that the attention they are receiving is not phony or a gimmick.

**Support and Feedback**

Support means helping employees produce a better product or service by removing obstacles that can interfere with getting work done effectively & efficiently.

Feedback involves sharing information about things related directly and indirectly to the job. This includes telling employees what they are doing right, as well as what they are doing wrong. Employees can handle negative feedback as long as they are working in an environment where they are respected, and where they can work and develop to their capacity.

Support and feedback creates openness in an organization. Openness enables employees to take action when things are unclear, recognize opportunities for improvement, and be receptive to change.

When support and feedback are lacking, it not only becomes a problem to get the job done right, but sometimes it's a problem to get the job done at all. Employees might turn their energies into trying to make sure they don't do the wrong things, rather than trying to do the right things. This can only result in mediocre quality and performance even in the best circumstances.