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690 King St., Suite 2, London, Ontario N5W-2X3 Phone (519)-667-1720 1-800-837-7046 Fax (519)-667-1722

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**Positive Reinforcement:**

**Reinforce Immediately**

Positive reinforcement is most powerful when it is immediate. Giving a little reinforcement right at the moment a behaviour is occurring is more effective than giving a lot of reinforcement three months later. Immediacy is particularly important at the beginning stages of quality improvement efforts for three reasons:

- Immediate reinforcement helps signal a change in culture. People look for cues that suggest this effort is going to be different than all the other soon-forgotten programs.
- Immediate reinforcement helps keep both enthusiasm and commitment high while waiting for the result of quality efforts to become visible. The satisfaction of seeing tangible payoffs from initial efforts can come weeks or months after the effort has been put forth. Waiting can cause the initial enthusiasm to wear off.
- Immediate reinforcement speeds up the formation of new habits. For most companies, creating a total quality culture requires replacing old, outdated, nonfunctional behaviours with new ones. The more immediate the feedback on new behaviours, the more likely those behaviours will become permanent.

**Supplier-Customer Relationships:**

**Establish Clearly Understood Requirements**

One of the first things a customer must do before selecting a supplier is to establish clear, precise requirements for the product or service to be provided. These requirements create a basis for evaluating suppliers.

Requirements are established by answering questions. In the case of supplier selection, questions might include:

- What is required?
- What is the anticipated schedule that must be supported?
- What experience should the supplier have in producing the product?
- To what extent will the supplier participate in developing the end product?
- How many sources will the product require?
- How will conformance to requirements be measured?
- What corrective action system is required?
- What geographic location is necessary for the supplier?

The answers to these questions will help a customer evaluate which supplier can best meet its needs.

**Get Customers Involved**

Studies show that 80% of successful new products and services come from customer ideas. Companies should get their customers involved and ask them what new products and services they would like.

When Ford built its 1994 Mustang, for example, it invited 200 loyal customers, which included members and presidents of Mustang clubs, to be part of the design team.

These customers provided critiques and new design ideas through Fax and E-Mail. Basically they told the design team what made a Mustang a Mustang.

These customers were not only reviewing the product but also test driving Cameros and Firebirds so they could tell Ford what they liked and disliked about the competitors' cars.

The input from Ford's customers was so important that this group overruled the design team twice.

The first design included front-wheel drive and a 4-cylinder engine. The 200 members went to their Mustang clubs and collected 30,000 letters written to Ford telling them they can build a 4-cylinder, front-wheel drive car if they want to but they are not allowed to call it a Mustang. A Mustang, according to these customers, can only be a V-8 with rear-wheel drive.

Originally there was not going to be a convertible in the line but customers were saying, "The coupe is probably what I will end up with, but there'd better be a convertible in the showroom or I won't be in the showroom." Ford included convertibles in the line.

With the help from these customers, the 1994 Mustang was brought to market in 25% less time with 30% fewer dollars spent than any comparable development program in Ford's recent history. The entire year's production was sold out by March, 1994.