

# Law Enforcement: Achieving Excellence Through Quality

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## Abstract

*Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy which emphasizes the role of quality at all levels of an organization. It has been implemented by many corporations and government agencies with a resulting increase in productivity and decrease in the number of defects. However, it is not without its drawbacks. TQM requires a considerable initial investment and a continuing commitment to process improvement. Many organizations have enthusiastically embraced TQM only to dispense with it when the fad has worn off. This paper provides a rationale for change in the management of law enforcement, an overview of TQM, an implementation strategy, and an application example. It takes into account the fundamental differences between the commercial sector and a typical law enforcement agency, drawing heavily upon the experiences of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office in making that transition.*

## Introduction

Police agencies today are saddled with increasing calls for service, escalating costs, and budget cuts. In many ways, these agencies are not unlike commercial enterprises in their need to employ new and innovative techniques to deliver services at lower prices. Advances in technology have helped, but their full potential has not been realized. To exploit that full potential, the processes by which those services are delivered must be improved.

One method of process improvement is to involve employees at all levels of decision making. Employees often have a keen insight into the way things might be improved and a vested interest in seeing their ideas succeed. Rather than revolutionary change, many small-scale, *evolutionary* changes can be made. Continued process improvement and employee empowerment are the hallmarks of Total Quality Management.

This paper will provide an overview of TQM, and outline a strategy that can be used to implement TQM in a typical law enforcement agency. Finally, this paper will provide an example of how TQM might be applied.

## TQM: An Overview

*Quality begins with the understanding that only customers can define quality .... Quality management is not just a strategy. It must be a new style of working, even a new style of thinking. A dedication to quality and excellence is more than good business. It is a way of life, giving something back to society, offering your best to others.*

*President George Bush*

Improving quality in the private and public sectors has become the management tool of the '90s. Methodologies abound: Total Quality Management (TQM), Total Quality Leadership, Total Quality Service, Total Quality Excellence, Improvement Management

System. The name is not as important as understanding why implementing a quality initiative will lead administrators to reevaluate the way in which law enforcement does business to improve overall agency effectiveness. Benefits can be realized by both the organization and, more importantly, the general public that it serves.

In the 1950s, W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran brought their theories of statistical quality control to help restore war-torn industries in Japan. The business culture in Japan was ripe to improve the quality of its goods and services. Over the next two decades the methods Deming and Juran put into place helped transform the Japanese economy. The connotation of the phrase "Made in Japan" shifted from cheap copy to become synonymous with world-class quality.

Following the lead of the Japanese, American industry began to introduce improvement processes in the 1980s. Peter Druker, Armand V. Fiegenbaum, and Phillip Crosby introduced variations of quality improvement to the United States. Total Quality Management has been applied by the private business sector over the past decade. Not until recently, though, has quality management generated such considerable attention in the public sector.

Over the past five years in the United States, TQM has begun spreading far beyond the confines of corporate business to all levels of government. At any convention of state or local government these days, it is the seminar on TQM that overflows the room and sends spectators spilling into the halls (Walters, 1992).

The Federal Government has embraced TQM principals as an approach to help solve management problems. Although government does not face the same type of competitive pressures that exist in the private sector, law enforcement managers have begun to look at TQM as an approach to help solve increasing demands on criminal justice organizations. An examination of the literature in the field of quality improvement reveals an increasing number of such programs in law enforcement.

Local governments in the United States are facing the same conditions that have led the private sector to adopt quality initiatives. For some organizations implementing TQM the financial savings have been significant. Equally significant are the intangible benefits derived from improved morale, enhanced communications, better sensitivity to taxpayer needs, faster turnaround time, and improved customer service.

TQM is both a philosophy and a set of guiding principles that represent the foundation of a continuously improving organization (U.S. Department of Defense, 1989). TQM is a strategic, integrated, customer-focused management system for achieving customer satisfaction (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 1991). It is an application of quantitative methods and human resources to improve the services supplied by an organization, all the processes within that organization, and the degree to which the needs of the customer are met, now and in the future. It is a way of managing at all levels, top management to front-line, to achieve customer satisfaction by involving all employees in continuously improving the work process of the organization. Three principles form the foundation of TQM:

1. Focus on achieving customer satisfaction (for law enforcement, it is the citizens we serve that are the customer base).
2. Seek continuous and long-term improvement in the organization's processes.

3. Take steps to ensure full involvement in the work force.

### Focus on Achieving Customer Satisfaction

User satisfaction is the ultimate requirement that everyone must strive to meet whether the user is an internal customer or an external customer. A "customer" or "user" is a generic term for the recipient or beneficiary of a process's output, i.e., the resulting product or service. Under the TQM approach, anyone who delivers a product or service to someone else views that person as a customer and attempts to determine his or her needs and requirements to improve the quality of the final product or service (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 1991).

Examples of external customers of a law enforcement agency are the State Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the City or County Commission. However, the citizen is the ultimate external customer.

Identifying the internal customer is more difficult. Each part of the organization has its own internal customers (human resources/support groups) in the organization. Each customer group has different expectations, values, and other factors which influence the type of service to be provided. An example of this would be the different expectations of the customers that a county correctional facility serves (inmates), and the customers that the supply and purchasing agent in the same agency serves (agency employees). Managers and employers cannot focus effectively on the external customer until they understand the importance of meeting each other's needs within and across departments and functions.

The needs of the customer change and must frequently be re-assessed. No matter how precise the measurement, the end result is of little value if it is focused on the wrong target. The person receiving the service is the best one to evaluate its effectiveness. What kind of service delivery do we provide?

### Continuous Process Improvement

Figure 1 lists the steps in the continuous improvement process, which begins with the establishment of an environment in which TQM can flourish. The foundation must be laid for the succeeding steps. Management must ensure that the support structure is put into place and that adequate resources are allocated. This is the responsibility of an Executive Steering Committee.

The Executive Steering Committee members should be appointed from the upper tier of management. Members should possess vision, commitment and communication skills that enable them to involve people in the process. Key staff members will support the implementation of disciplined methodologies, such as structural analysis, to define internal processes and describe organizational interfaces. The committee will also ensure that TQM training is received by all employees.

At the end of the initial phase of implementation, the Executive Steering Committee will establish TQM Boards. Thereafter, the committee will review the activities of these boards and solicit feedback from the employees.

The TQM Boards are set up along functional lines within the organization. Department heads serve as chairmen; the board is composed of a cross-section of interested employees. Representation on these boards should be competitive and not

considered as an extra duty. The boards will:

- Conduct process analyses.
- Target specific processes that need improvement.
- Establish Performance Improvement Teams.
- Assign and train TQM facilitators.
- Establish and maintain schedules.

Once the TQM Boards are established, the cyclical process of identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating begins. Processes are continuously refined through small incremental improvements.

After the TQM Boards are established, Focus Teams are appointed by the TQM Boards to investigate specific improvement projects. They are drawn from the group which the board represents. Focus Teams have a specific charter and are disbanded at the completion of the activity. They continually employ the Process Improvement model to iteratively measure, assess, analyze, identify and improve processes. Figure 2 depicts the interaction of the Executive Steering Committee, the TQM Boards, the Focus Teams, and the employees.

### Ensure Full Involvement of the Work Force

Reflecting a long-term trend toward participatory management in American society, TQM is based on the theory that the greater the involvement an employee has in determining organizational goals, the more committed he or she will be to achieving them. TQM encourages commitment, teamwork, and better quality by providing incentives to increase the success of the whole enterprise (Milakovich, 1991).

The essence of TQM is involving the entire work force, not just a select few, to continuously improve the quality of services. A cultural transformation will take place as management, supervisors and employees are educated in the principals and operating practices of TQM. As the quality improvement effort matures and spreads throughout the organization, TQM becomes an integral component of the organization's culture, and everyone participates routinely. To sustain a long-term quality improvement effort, however, basic systematic changes, coupled with new management practices, are needed.

Barriers may impede the continuous improvement efforts that organizations have worked so hard to establish. By identifying these barriers and acting on them, an increase in satisfaction will develop and enable successful improvements. The following barriers must be addressed:

- Ambiguous understanding of policies.
- Little or no planning for short-term objectives and long-term goals.
- Unstructured individualistic decision-making.
- Few team incentives.
- Problem identification rather than process improvement.

Subordinates should be encouraged to identify these barriers and, by structuring the improvement effort through team activity, help to reduce them. This is an ongoing

process, since barriers will never be totally eliminated. There will be a constant battle to keep them from recurring. Management can assist in involving the work force by:

- Adopting a systematic approach to policy definition and implementation.
- Striking a balance between short-term objectives and long-term goals.
- Facilitating an environment in which participative problem-solving can take place.
- Recognizing and rewarding employees.

### Implementation

For TQM to be implemented, structural as well as attitudinal barriers must be overcome to create and sustain a total quality improvement process (Milakovich, 1991). A significant change in cultural philosophy must occur for quality management to flourish. By the very nature of the "police culture," resistance to change suggests difficulty for implementation. Law Enforcement culture does not teach us to drop our guard and cooperate with others. We want to beat them on the battlefields.

Generally speaking, people reach a comfort level and become resistant to change. Old habits become difficult to break. Once the comfort level is reached, the learning process becomes so ingrained in the organization that it becomes almost intuitive. Sometimes people do not have to even be told what needs to be done. When a change in paradigms is suggested, people are being asked to give up their comfort levels. While the system may not be working correctly, it is comfortable.

Law Enforcement must learn to become transformational. Administrators must change the way they think and do business by completely reframing the way services are delivered to external customers, the citizens. There must be a change or shift in organizational paradigms. The resistance to change is generally not from the top or at the operational level but often comes from the middle. This makes it difficult to adapt to a new and changing world and accept new management systems. If the processes are too complex, expensive, or unattractive, TQM is sure to stall or fail.

The seven operating guidelines to implement TQM are:

1. Demonstrate personal leadership and support of TQM by the top management.
2. Strategically plan the short- and long-term implementation of TQM throughout the organization.
3. Assure that everyone focuses on the customers' needs and expectations.
4. Develop clearly defined measures for tracking progress and identifying improvement opportunities.
5. Provide adequate resources for training and recognition to enable workers to carry the mission forward and reinforce positive behavior.
6. Empower workers to make decisions and foster teamwork.

7. Develop systems to assure that quality is built in at the beginning and throughout daily operations.

Actual implementation can be accomplished in three phases. First, the TQM environment and support structures must be created. The Executive Steering Committee is assembled and trained. The interaction between functional departments is studied and the key processes are identified. Performance is baselined to serve as a benchmark from which to compare subsequent improvements.

The second phase of implementation begins with the creation of the TQM Boards. Board members are trained. With the help of facilitators, the boards analyze their internal processes and target areas for improvement.

The third and final phase occurs when all employees have received training and the cycle of continuous process improvement has begun.

Employee education and training is fundamental to TQM. In planning for TQM training, explicit attention should be given to both the current and expected future training requirements as the quality improvement process evolves. If everyone is to participate effectively in the quality effort, then everyone must have the necessary knowledge and skills. All employees must understand their jobs, their roles in the organization, and how their jobs will change. Employees need to know how they fit into the quality initiative.

In Phillip Crosby's book, Let's Talk Quality, he addressed the need for quality process improvement teams to receive proper training. He said that a quality improvement team is not a SWAT squad designated to go solve problems. Quality improvement training is education of the team members, combination among operations, and leadership of the process. It is a living entity that survives its members. It is not a ritual; it is leadership (Caroselli, 1991).

The length of time necessary to properly train staff is identified as a likely barrier in law enforcement organizations. Budget constraints are a factor that can conceivably cause hardship to smaller agencies with limited funding. Because of budget constraints, a major question is who should provide the training. Should training be presented through an external quality awareness program or handled internally by trained staff from within the organization? The answer to this question is both.

Karen Auth, a Quality Coordinator for AT&T, recommended the use of internal staff to conduct the training of employees. She reasons that internally training line staff demonstrates an internal commitment to the quality improvement process of the organization by management. Employees can relate the TQM instruction to operational issues confronted by the agency in day-to-day operations and otherwise bring credibility to the instruction. Training in TQM can be the most effective way to gain in-depth understanding and appreciation for the process and thus a good way to enhance ownership by employees at all levels. TQM trained personnel can influence their peers. Involvement of employees as the trainers can help to enforce the buy-in commitment.

As the quality improvement effort matures and spreads throughout the organization, TQM becomes an integral component of the organization's culture and everyone participates routinely. Although participation in the start-up phase is usually voluntary, top management teams should be required to participate in key training, such

as TQM awareness, leadership and organizational change, so they can effectively lead the overall effort.

### Application Example

One of the first processes the Seminole County Sheriff's Office investigated was the generation of crime reports by uniformed personnel. A study was undertaken to determine the activities involved in creating a report, such as the person performing the activity and the duration of time involved. The results are shown below:

Receive Call	2 minutes
Respond to Call	13 minutes
Interview	15 minutes
Write Report	20 minutes
Review Report	5 minutes
Enter Data	10 minutes
TOTAL	65 minutes

In evaluating the data, it was determined that a considerable savings could be realized if the reports could be automated. The former method was for officers to complete the forms (including carbon copies) and then have them reviewed by a supervisor. After approval, the reports were forwarded to data entry personnel to be entered in the department computer system.

Automation of the system required an initial capital investment of \$150,000 for the purchase of laptop computers and software. Additionally, it required the training and the creation of front-end application programs by computer department personnel.

It was estimated that data entry effort was 1.5 man-years annually at an average rate of \$16,000, for an estimated annual saving of \$24,000. An additional \$16,000 was saved by eliminating paper copies. Preliminary estimates show a saving of 10 minutes, or 50%, of the time involved in writing reports. With an annual production of 25,000 reports, this could result in savings of 4,200 man-hours, or approximately \$51,000. The total realized annual cost savings has been \$91,000.

There have been further intangible benefits. Spelling checkers can be utilized to correct spelling errors in reports, thus eliminating time in the review and rewrite cycle. Query templates can be created for specific offenses to ensure that all elements of a crime are covered in the report. Previous reports and pertinent data can be accessed to check for background information on similar crimes or likely suspects.

### Summary

An increasing number of organizations are providing some type of quality training presented as quality improvement, total quality management, or quality control training. No matter how titled, the programs are aimed at improving the quality of an organization's services. Total Quality Management techniques used in industry can be successfully adapted to law enforcement organizations. What began in Japan in the 1950s, and progressed to American private industry in the 1980s, has grown in popularity in the public sector. The number of law enforcement organizations moving from traditional styles of management to more contemporary styles such as TQM is not

known. TQM requires strategic planning and empowerment of employees at all levels of the organization. Those employees make more decisions and become involved in the change and future of the organization through training, human resource management practices, and advanced participative management.

Each organization has its own unique needs that reflect the past and existing management culture, mix of background and skills in the work force, and quality deployment strategy. Each agency considering whether to embark on a quality journey should design its TQM effort to meet its own unique needs, particularly in relation to its overall TQM implementation strategy.

Law enforcement agencies, like any governmental agency, rely on taxes for their budgets. Meeting the taxpayers expectations of service is no longer enough; those expectations must be exceeded. It is important to manage assets and resources so to respond positively to such challenges. Total Quality Management is a complicated and demanding system, and agencies must realize that some results are immediate, while others may take years of commitment to achieve in support of a never-ending improvement process.

Greg Barnett is a 17-year veteran in law enforcement. He started as a deputy sheriff with the Volusia County Sheriff's Department in 1977 moving to the Seminole County Sheriff's Office in the same year. After his promotions to Sergeant in 1987 and Lieutenant in 1990, Greg became an Inspector, and now supervises the Professional Standards Division.

He is a graduate of Rollins College (B.S. in criminal justice) and the FCJEL Senior Leadership Program. Greg is married to Joanne, his wife of 16 years, and has two daughters, Kelly and Kristin.

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