

Quality Circle: A Modern Management Tool for Libraries

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Abstract

Basically Quality Circle is a management tool that is used by manufacturing organizations to achieve quality improvement goals – process improvement, productivity improvement and effective utilization of manpower. It is in fact a cost effective tool for overall improvement in an organization. In the present paper the authors try to project this tool as an effective method for a library to improve its effectiveness and improvement in its day-to-day working and quality of services to users. It argues that this concept encourages employee participation, promotes teamwork and motivates them to contribute towards overall effectiveness of library activities through small group activities.

Keywords: Quality Circle; Quality Management; Library Management.

Introduction

Survival of a library in the present day information society is possible only if it changes with the changing needs of the society. The library being a service institution has to continuously explore methods, tools and techniques to measure, control and improve the quality of services being extended to its clientele. Innovation and implementation of new tools and techniques for imparting quality services to clientele, workplace improvement and working efficiency improvement of workforce has been a crucial area for the library professionals to continuously work upon. Libraries generally conduct various types of surveys to assess the level of satisfaction of its users with reference to resources, facilities and services. Users' satisfaction survey is one of the tools to assess the quality of services a library provides to its users and satisfaction assessment of the user community.

Quality circle is a positive and humanistic approach to productive management. It is a modern management concept designed to bring together all levels of workforce in a manufacturing organization for setting standards of excellence and achieving better results. A quality circle involves participation from a small group of employees doing the same type

of work. They meet regularly to identify, analyze and solve the problems that arise during the course of their work and their association with the organization. Quality Circle concepts can be adopted in libraries of any type – academic, special or public, not only to improve library services but also to utilize skills and knowledge of the library staff. It encourages each participant of a group or team to develop the best of his skills and knowledge. It offers an opportunity for an individual to work and learn as a team member. It motivates an individual by recognizing his contribution for his organization. For a modern library it brings immense benefits to library staff by improving their day-to-day working as well as improving the quality of services to user community.

Quality Circle Concept

Quality Circle is one of the employee participation methods. It implies the development of skills, capabilities, confidence and creativity of the people through cumulative process of education, training, work experience and participation. It also implies the creation of facilitative conditions and environment of work, which creates and sustains their motivation and commitment towards work excellence. Quality Circles have emerged as a mechanism to develop and utilize the tremendous potential of people for improvement in product quality and productivity.

Prof. Ishikawa who is known as 'The Father of Quality Circle Movement' started the Quality Circle Concept in Japan after the Second World War. It is a popular concept in Japan where you find hardly any

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worker who is not a member of one or other Quality Circle. It is believed that Quality Circle concept was largely responsible for rebuilding and stabilizing the shattered economy of Japan after Second World War. This concept has since gained wide acceptance and is being used all over the world because of its huge benefits. Today due to highly competitive market every organisation is striving for survival. Increasing complexities of work procedure, rising cost and low morale of manpower are the major concern which every organisation has to deal with. Quality Circle is very effective tool for improvement of organizational effectiveness as it involves employee from the shop floor to top management of an organization with a common objective of improvement. Quality Circle concept has three major attributes - Participative Management, Human Resource Development, and Problem Solving.

Seeing its immense success with encouraging results *Quality Circle Forum of India [1] (QCFI)* was formed in Secundrabad in 1982 to create awareness of its benefits and for imparting skills in implementing Quality Circle in different organisation. It is actively involved in sharing experience of Indian organizations.

The concept of Quality Circle is primarily based upon recognition of the value of the worker as a human being, as someone who willingly activates his wisdom, intelligence, experience, attitude and feelings on his job. It is based upon the human resource management which is considered as one of the key factors in the improvement of product quality and productivity. Quality Circle concept has three major attributes:

- Quality Circle is a form of participation management.
- Quality Circle is a human resource development technique.
- Quality Circle is a problem solving technique.

Philosophy of Quality Circle

Quality Circle is a people building philosophy, providing self-motivation and happiness in improving environment without any compulsion or monetary benefits. It represents a philosophy of managing people specially those at the grass root level as well as a clearly defined mechanism and methodology for translating this philosophy into practice and a required structure to make it a way of life. It is bound to succeed where people are respected and are involved in decisions, concerning their work life, and in environments where peoples' capabilities

are looked upon as assets to solve work-area problems.

The Quality Circle philosophy calls for a progressive attitude on the part of the management and their willingness to make adjustments, if necessary, in their style and culture. If workers are prepared to contribute their ideas, the management must be willing to create a congenial environment to encourage them to do so.

Objective of Quality Circle

Quality Circle is a small group of 5 to 15 employees doing similar work who voluntarily meet together on a regular basis to identify improvements in their respective work areas using proven techniques for analyzing and solving work related problems coming in the way of achieving and sustaining excellence leading to mutual upliftment of employees as well as the organization. It is "a way of capturing the creative and innovative power that lies within the work force".

The objectives of Quality Circles are multi-faced:

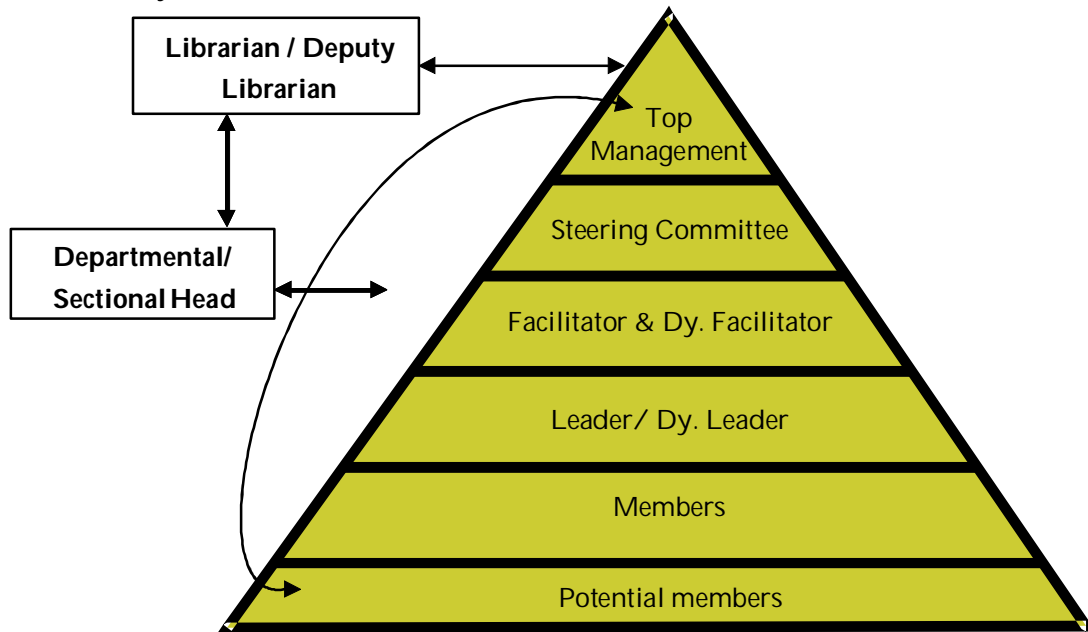
- Change in Attitude
- Continuous improvement in quality of work life through humanization of work
- Self Development
- People get to learn additional skills
- Development of Team Spirit
- Eliminate inter departmental conflicts.
- Improved Organizational Culture
- Positive working environment. Total involvement of people at all levels
- Higher motivational level. Participative Management process

Characteristics of Quality Circle

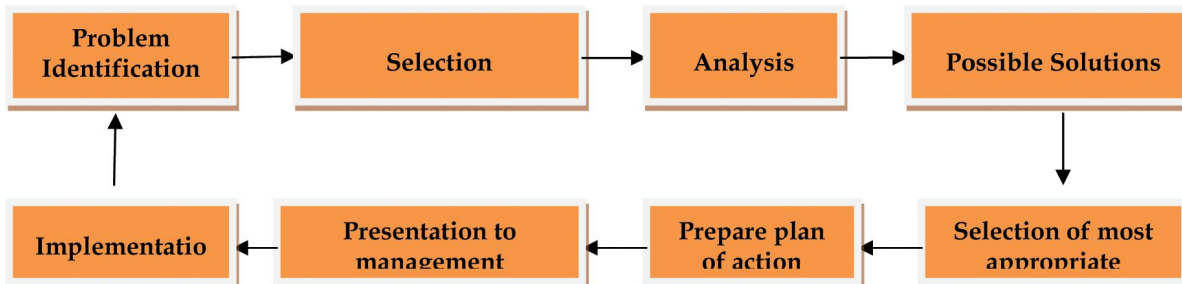
The following are the main characteristics of Quality Circle

1. Members are from the same work area and know each other well.
2. Members are to be closely knit to work as a team.
3. For Group work to be meaningful, members should interact with each other adequately and regularly by holding regular meeting.
4. Members should have common objectives.
5. There should be openness in the group and every member should have autonomy to put his views.
6. A Quality Circle leader has to lead the group but should not dominate the proceedings.

Structure of Quality Circle [2]



Implementation Process of Quality Circles



Working Model of Quality Circle [3]

Problem Identification

Identification of problems by Quality Circle Members through structured method of 'Brain storming'.

Problem Selection

Selection of the Problem by rating/prioritization and registration of project.

Problem Analysis

On Selection of the problem, the Quality Circle will move forward with the problem solving approach of Defining the Problem, Problem analysis, data collection, identification of causes, finding the root causes & data analysis, developing solution, foreseeing probable resistance, trial implementation, regular implementation, follow-up & review process. Quality Circle Tools like brainstorming, Pareto Analysis, Cause & Effect Diagram, Graphs, Flow

Chart, Stratification, Data Collection, Scattered Diagram, Control Charts are applied at various problem solving steps as appropriate for implementation of projects.

Generate Alternative Solutions

On the basis of Step 3 numbers of possible alternative solutions are generated.

Select the Most Appropriate Solution

On the basis of comparison best alternative solution is selected for implementation. Investment, return of investment, feasibility, and simplicity are the criteria taken into account to select best alternative solution.

Prepare Plan of Action

A detailed action plan for implementation of project

into reality are prepared for presentation Quality Circle activity meeting registers are maintained and kept updated. A brief summary of the project stating the problem, solution developed and implemented are prepared. The projects are inspected by inspection team.

Present Solution to Management

The projects are then presented before a team of experts for formal approval and implementation in totality.

Implementation of Project

Project is implemented on a full scale and results are analysed by comparing present and previous position.

Benefits of Quality Circle

Quality Circle adaption by a library is helpful in many ways as it involves personnel from bottom to top level. It basically involves employee participation. Participative methods in the workplace are one way to improve working environment for employee and work efficiency and quality of services [4]. For the success of a Quality circle it is necessary that staff should be in sufficient number, they have time to attend quality circle meetings regularly and there should be full support from the top management.

Some of the benefits of the quality circles are:

- It enables an individual to improve his skills and knowledge and enhance his self respect.
- It develops positive attitudes in an individual as he feels a sense of involvement in the decision making processes. Hence it motivates an individual.
- It improves team spirit and rapport building with other members of the team, as every individual in the team is free to express his views.
- It develops a healthy workplace for an individual where he feels at home to work with full energy.
- It Improve quality of work and services in a cost effective way.

- More importantly it achieves overall improvement and development of a section/ department or a library as a whole.

Conclusion

Quality Circle though a tool developed for manufacturing organisations, can be very effective for libraries of any kind or any size. A library system consists of many sub systems or sections where a person or staff involved better knows how they can improve it further? Thus by building a culture of quality circle we can bring changes. The pace at which the new technologies are now growing is of concern to library professionals, as they have to organize and manage the information in the changing environment. If the librarians of today have to survive they must keep in mind the changing need of today's information seeker – their changing information seeking behaviour, changing information format/ media and changing pattern of services expectation by users. Libraries being service-oriented institutions must accept this change and strive to align their work with this changing environment. It should be professional commitment of a librarian to explore new tools and technology to assess, measure and evaluate their working so as to bring continuous improvement. If we will be successful in doing this we will receive wider popularity and also enhance the visibility of our library system.

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