

QM&T May 2002 Newsletter

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IQA Diploma in Quality	1
The Gurus	1
ISO Contest	1
Quality of air	2
Mont Blanc Tunnel	2
Care quality regulator launched	2
Watchdog fines Barclays Stockbrokers	2
Teaching quality	2
Holes in the firewall	3
E-government targets	3

IQA Diploma in Quality

The Institute of Quality Assurance is introducing this new qualification in September 2002, which will replace the old qualification scheme and is being accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The New Diploma in Quality consists of 6 module/unit (D1 – D6) and each module can be taken as a mini qualification.

D1 – Introduction to Quality

D2 – Quality Management

D3 – Tools and Techniques

D4 – Communication and Project Management

D5 – Quality Project

D6 – Elective module (D6.1 – Quality and Environmental Management, D6.2 – Computers in QA)

For more information please visit www.iqa.org and www.qmt.co.uk

The Gurus

Last month we introduced W. Edwards Deming as one of the influential figures in the field of Quality Assurance. This month we are introducing A.V. Feigenbaum.

Dr. Armand V. Feigenbaum

Dr. Armand V. Feigenbaum, an American Engineer, is the originator of Total Quality Control. The first edition of his book “Total Quality Control” was written in 1951, but organisations are only now employing some of the concepts and principles embodied in his book. Total Quality Control may be considered the forerunner to BS 5750, although not to be confused with Total Quality Management (TQM). What Feigenbaum’s book provided was more of a model for a Quality Assurance Management System, rather than TQM, which may be considered more of a motivational concept. Originally Quality Assurance was mainly considered to be controlling the quality of manufacture. Feigenbaum had the foresight to see that this was only part of the story - Quality was Total and needed to involve all functions associated with the process of fulfilling the customer requirements; from initial specification and design control through to the manufacturing stages. More recently this concept has been extended vertically, into service industries and horizontally, by encompassing all departments within an organisation - with the introduction of the concept “internal customers,”

Feigenbaum is also known for his concept of the “hidden plant”. In every factory a certain portion of its capacity is wasted through not getting it right the first time. Feigenbaum suggested a figure of up to 40% being wasted. At the time it was thought this figure was quite high, but even today some managers are learning that this figure is not too far removed from the truth.

ISO Contest

The contest is held every 2 years and its aim is to encourage young professionals in developing countries to take up careers in standardization and to raise awareness of the importance of standards in promoting safe economic development. The Award is co-sponsored by ISO and the Deutsches Institut

für Normung (DIN), ISO member for Germany. The theme for the 2002 Award is “Standards for the Environment”.

Applications can submit their paper to the ISO Central Secretariat, which has to be written in English. A panel of independent judges nominated by ISO will review the papers and select the winning one. The winner will be awarded a plaque and a cash prize of 2500 Swiss Francs, or, alternatively, a cash prize of 1000 Swiss Francs and a trip to the ISO Central Secretariat in Geneva to receive the award from the ISO Secretary-General. For more information please visit www.iso.org

Quality of air

It has been reported that poor air quality has a direct effect on our health, and even the weather can be affected. Pollutants created by heavy industry, houses and motor vehicles can upset the natural balance, affecting people with breathing difficulties, causing the tubes in the lungs to become irritated and narrowed. Pollutants can also cause smog and acid rain.

Doncaster is the first local authority in South Yorkshire to declare Air Quality Management Areas. The town centre air quality is measured and monitored by air quality laboratories in the borough every minute of the day, every day of the year. The whole of Doncaster Borough is smoke controlled which means that it is an offence to burn coal in a smoke controlled area. It is actually an offence to even deliver coal to a domestic property in a smoke controlled area. The maximum fine for a household is £1000, and the maximum fine for an industry is £20,000.

Mont Blanc Tunnel

It was reported that The Mont Blanc tunnel between France and Italy reopened in March, nearly three years after the devastating fire, which killed 39 people. Initially only cars will be allowed through the tunnel, lorries are expected to be allowed through after mid-March. The 1999 fire which burned for two days, started in a lorry then spread to nearby cars. The inquiry into the incident led to a radical reassessment of safety needs in the Mont Blanc tunnel. Some of these safety features include the fitting of fire-resistant sheeting to its walls. More traffic lights and warning signs have been added. Concrete-lined shelters have been built every 300 metres apart. Over a hundred smoke extractors have been fitted every 100 meters apart. Heat sensors have been put in at each end of the tunnel to detect overheated trucks before they enter the tunnel. Over a hundred video cameras are being used to monitor traffic 24 hours a day. The tunnel now has three command centres. The main one is located on the French side, with a back-up centre at the Italian end. A central command post will be manned 24 hours a day by a fire fighting team.

Care quality regulator launched

It was recently reported that standards in nursing homes, private hospitals and long-term care providers are to be regulated by a new body. The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) is an independent body charged with registering and inspecting social, private and voluntary care services across England. The NCSC will have the power to shut down services if they fail to meet the standards. It can also prosecute providers, and remove them from the register permanently so they can no longer operate. The commission has a team of inspectors that will be based in Newcastle.

Watchdog fines Barclays Stockbrokers

In a recent article it was reported that the Barclays Stockbrokers have been fined by the financial watchdog the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA) for failing to properly maintain their clients' accounts. Stockbrokers need to keep good records of their client assets and reconcile their internal accounts with those of the customers and Crest, the electronic share settlement system, so they can pay dividends correctly. But Barclays had a backlog of unreconciled stocks. This was mainly due to an office move, which also coincided with five large building societies demutualisation whose shares Barclays Stockbrokers were heavily involved in. But the SFA praised Barclays Stockbrokers for full cooperation to resolve the matter quickly.

Teaching quality

University students in England will be asked how good their university courses are. The aim is to raise standards in universities. The survey will be carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The responsibility for quality and standards will be put in the institutions themselves, but it proposes a cycle of six-year audits carried out by a team of academics sent in by the

agency. The institutions will have to publish information on quality and standards and carry out its own internal monitoring using outside reviewers.

Universities dislike any attempt of ranking them in league tables, as is done for schools. Although some newspapers do their own ranking by using a variety of indicators. For example, The Times, uses a statistical technique for entry qualifications of students, teaching quality, staffing levels and graduate employment.

Holes in the firewall

The number of problems reported in firewalls has increased by nearly 50% over the past 4 years because of IT professionals not knowing how to configure them. IT managers have been accused of leaving firewalls open for hackers to get in. A report by security testing specialist "NTA Monitor" found that problems in firewalls have increased by 45% since 1998, because of poor configuration and sloppy patching, giving hackers a way in to corporate networks. The question is are the IT managers being harshly criticised? It has also been suggested that some companies haven't learned how to install their firewalls properly. Companies are unable to keep up with the latest vulnerabilities because of the misconfiguration problems. According to the NTA Monitor, 3 years ago firewalls were quite rare, only firms who really needed them had them, but now there are so many companies who need firewalls because of the Internet use. NTA Monitor suggests there should be ways of checking how the firewall has been configured. For more information please visit www.silicon.com

E-government targets

The UK Government faces a hard struggle if it is to achieve its ambitious goal for getting all services online by 2005. It is predicted that all local governments will have some services online by 2005, but whether they will achieve all services and whether they will all be connected to each other, is doubtful. Nevertheless the government remains confident that it will achieve its targets.