



An introduction to managing and measuring the quality of customer experience and satisfaction in IPM

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Part 1:

Managing the quality of customer experience and satisfaction

1. Introduction

World-wide Pest Control companies are coming more and more to the realization that trying to compete solely on cost leads to ineffectiveness and a weaker financial position. Trying to compete on service and product differentiation is futile because products and services are becoming less-and-less unique. The only way to ensure sustainable profit, growth and even survival (in these tough economic times) is the provision of IPM through a deliberate process of managing customer experience to ensure customer satisfaction which in turn leads to less complaints and in the final instance to higher customer loyalty which leads to more repeat business and more business through word-of-mouth referral.

2. The origins and current applications of quality and quality management

It is a generally accepted and well-known fact that if you do not produce quality products and services your company and the services it provides may rapidly become redundant. The increasing importance of quality has become a global issue in that the world is increasingly becoming a service and information intensive economy. In order to survive and be competitive Pest Control Companies are required to provide experiences through their services and products of exceptional quality.

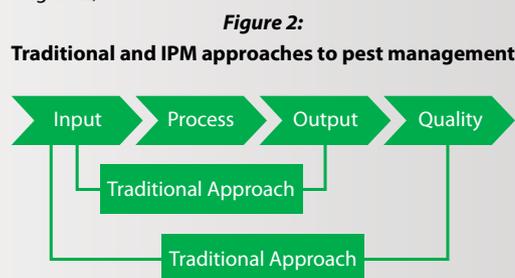
Quality is not a recent phenomenon of modern business practice in fact it can be traced back as far as 13th century Europe with the formation (by craftsmen) of guilds. However, it was World War II when quality became a critical to the war effort. The defence forces initially inspected every unit of production and then, to speed up the production process the armed forces started to make use of sampling and statistical process control techniques without compromising safety.

The era of total quality in the United States came as a direct response to the quality revolution in Japan following World War II. The Japanese saw the work that was done by Americans Joseph M. Juran and W. Edwards Deming and commissioned their services. Rather than concentrating on inspection their work focused on improving all organizational processes through the people who used them. The Japanese started to outperform the United States in industrial sectors such as automobiles and electronics and in

response the Americans introduced total quality management (TQM) which involves statistics that embraces the entire organisation. In spite of criticism against TQM it's practices continue. Today new quality systems have evolved beyond manufacturing into service, healthcare, education and government sectors (American Society for Quality, 2017). One of these systems is ISO. The International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) 9000 series addresses various aspects of quality management. The standards provide guidance and tools for companies and organizations who want to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer's requirements, and that quality is consistently improved. Quality has evolved through four eras i.e. product-, service, relationship and customer experience.

3. The strategic and practical significance of managing quality of IPM

Pest management companies and their management are charged with having to think strategically about IPM. A traditional conceptualisation of pest management is the ratio of inputs to outputs whilst an IPM focus is on quality (see figure 2).



When applied in IPM where for example cockroaches occur the approaches can be explained as follows:

PCO 1 follows the traditional approach and cockroaches are killed by applying pesticide to cracks and crevices monthly. Unfortunately, this pest management approach does not permanently solve a pest problem, and often creates new issues:

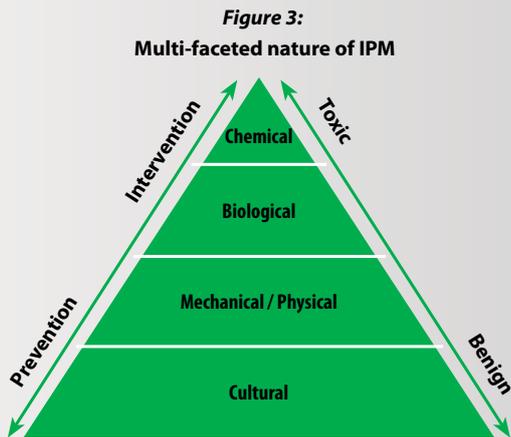
- The spray enters cracks and crevices but it can spread and come into contact with food, food preparation surfaces and other areas.
- Using this approach also only affects cockroaches near the surface and those hidden away are not affected. Application of flushing agents can cause the cockroaches to spread to previously uninfected areas.
- In addition, utilising the traditional approach of pesticide spray does not kill the egg cases that female cockroaches carry. When those eggs hatch, the nymphs eat anything that they can get, grow, reproduce and the cycle begins all over again.

PCO 2 follows the IPM approach which yields different results:

- To start, PCO 2 consults with facilities management and the process starts by cleaning the whole area. This helps remove food sources for the cockroaches, removes the dead cockroaches and egg cases (a food allergen source) and removes roach faeces and body parts (frass).
- Cracks and crevices are sealed, preventing shelter for the cockroaches.
- Sticky traps are placed to monitor areas prone to infestation.
- Baits are also being placed and work better than sprays because they don't disperse cockroaches and bait is carried to the nest where cockroaches are gathered. When infected adults defecate, nymphs will eat the faeces (which are poisonous) and die as well.

4. Managing quality in IPM

The multi-faceted nature (see Figure 3) of IPM requires skilful management.



Adapted from Pennsylvania State University 2012

Quality in IPM starts with the pest management company and skilful management of the company requires application of the four functions of management (depicted in figure 4):

Figure 4:
Management Functions

Planning	Organising	Leading	Controlling
1. Vision & Mission	1. Organisation design	1. Leadership	1. Systems / processes
2. Strategy (options)	2. Culture	2. Decision making	2. Strategic human resources
3. Goal & objectives	3. Social networks	3. Communications	
		4. Groups / teams	
		5. Motivation	
Strategy formulation	Strategy Implementation		

4.1 Planning for quality in IPM

Strategic planning begins with a vision and a mission, the primary overall purpose of an organisation and its expressed reason for existence. Another important factor related to planning for quality in IPM is the formulation of objectives of an IPM programme as well as quality objectives.

4.2 Organising for quality in IPM

Organising is the process of creating a structure for the pest management company that will enable its employees to work effectively together towards its objectives and providing high quality service, products and value for money.

4.3 Leading quality in IPM

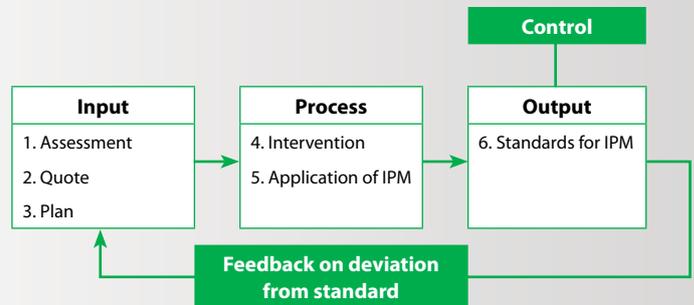
Getting started with delivering quality in IPM and keeping it going is in the final analysis as a result of leadership. Leadership is the only mechanism that can transform organisations from mediocrity to excellence (Zeithaml, 2010).

4.4 Controlling quality in IPM

Traditionally control has followed a three-step process that consists of (a)

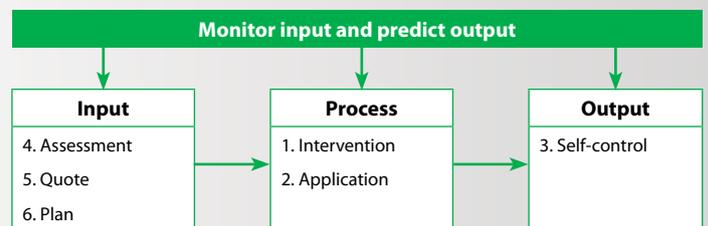
setting standards, (b) reporting variances and (c) correcting deviances. However, in an organisation that perceives control in this way the danger exists that the (control) system could become the end rather than the means. The difference between total quality control and traditional control is the difference between self-control and control by variance report, between continuous and historical control, between feedforward and feedback control. Feedback control in IPM:

Figure 6:
Feedback control in IPM



Assuming there is measurement of output, the standard is compared to the output, and variances are reported after the fact. The problem is that the deviation has already occurred and nothing can be done to change it. For example, the IPM manager receives an after-the-fact report of ineffective pest management at a supermarket or food handling establishment. Total quality control should be feedforward and predictive (see Figure 7). Instead of measuring output after-the-fact input is monitored by the PCO concerned and output is forecast. For example, PCO's are encouraged to correct their own errors and expose quality problems they discover thereby ensuring effectiveness and high quality IPM. This approach is fundamental for process control and continuous improvement of processes. Feedforward control in IPM:

Figure 7:
Feedforward control in IPM



Therefore, the burden of evidence of quality IPM rests with the PCO who is the provider of the service. PCO's, and not IPM managers, are responsible for achieving standards of quality in IPM. PCO's are trained and then trusted to take care of quality. The question that has to be answered is how can management processes and principles be synchronised to achieve high quality service provision. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach (theory) which provides the answer in that it rests on common assumptions of how to achieve quality performance of services within and outside the pest control company.

5. Conclusion

Customer experience of IPM services delivered is globally increasing in importance and it is expected that customers will become more and more demanding in a information and technologically advanced world. To adapt to this changing world where customer centricity in business is becoming the key differentiator to achieve competitiveness a pre-requisite to ensure competitiveness, growth and survival is the deliberate and skilful management of customer experience. A pre-requisite to skilful management of customer experience is measurement, which will be the topic of discussion in Part 2 of this series of measuring and mangling customer experience in IPM.