MAKING WAVES

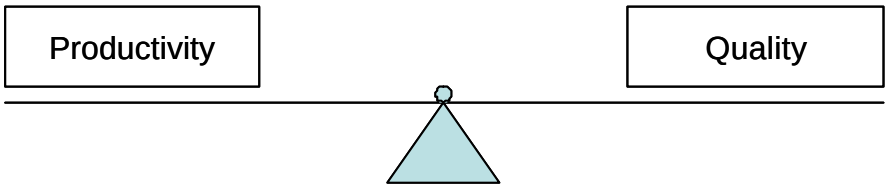
How hard are you working now, compared with say 5 years ago – Less hard? About the same? Much harder?
What about other people in your organization? Your department? Are they also in the same situation?
I don't think anyone would disagree that we are all now working much harder than in the past.

But is this sustainable? Is the further increase in performance improvement still worth the additional cost (in human as well as financial terms) of achieving it?

To help put these questions in a different perspective, let's briefly review the TQM revolution in South Africa in the last decade.

In order to remain competitive, we had to increase productivity. In order to at least hold market share, we also had to improve quality. It was extremely difficult to achieve both ends at the same time however because our paradigm in those days was: -

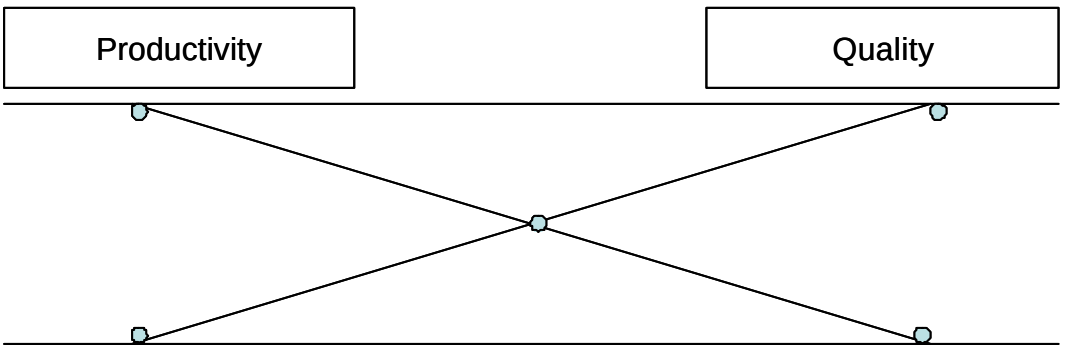
Old Productivity-Quality Paradigm



If we forced productivity up, quality was unfortunately (but unavoidably) compromised. Likewise, if we were able to increase quality, if was generally at the expense of productivity. We were so caught up in this "either / or" paradigm, that performance improvement was at best a slow, tortuous, up-hill battle – and we were being left behind by the rest of the world.

But then came TQM **……** and with it a whole wave of performance improvement that put SA back in the race. Looking back on the mid 1990's we can see that the TQM performance wave was born of a compelling business case, fuelled by the passion to survive, but actually created by innovation. Innovation changed our productivity – quality paradigm to: -

New Productivity Quality Paradigm



The new "and" paradigm showed us how to imagine improving productivity and quality simultaneously. And so we did! We re-engineered processes. We made better use of technology; outsourced non-core processes; and made enormous progress, entirely due to our innovative new productivity – quality paradigm.

That mid-1990s performance wave is now pretty well spent, however, and we are in danger of being left high and dry in the ebb, unless there is another performance wave. That's why we are all working harder than in the past. We have been trying to achieve better and better results by doing the same things over and over, faster and "better" than before; but not doing anything different. Like the freestyle swimming world record that was broken recently. The new record is just one hundredth of one second faster than the old one; but it took many years (and huge financial investment) to achieve. Cost / benefits of these relative magnitudes in business are just not viable. But we are not limited to swimming. Unlike swimmers, we can get there by doing different things. We can, in fact we **must**, innovate; **and** encourage our people to innovate; **and** reward them for doing so successfully. This is the only way to make the next performance wave. Without a new performance wave, we are beached -- We will work harder and harder and get less and less return on our effort.

Only innovation can give us the quantum leaps we need, to achieve the results we need, without exhausting ourselves and our people, in the process. So what waves have you made recently?

If you would like to find out how we can assist you in creating and sustaining a culture of innovation in your organization, please email mh@mikehonnet.com or lc@mikehonnet.com, or telephone on (mobile) +2782 414 3759 or (landline) +2711 285 0086/7. We would love to hear from you.

For further insights into our practice, please visit our web site at www.mikehonnet.com