



## Implementing Quality Assurance Best Practices

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A quality assurance system is a set of policies and procedures that define the way your business operates so as to deliver a consistent high level of customer service meet legal requirements and generally assist you in working out ways of doing things better.

Documenting them has extra benefits – the ability to train employees to a consistent high standard of performance and as a source of information so people aren't always asking their manager or supervisor questions of procedure.



BEST PRACTICE	WE DO THIS? Y/N	COMMENT
<b>PREPARE THE TEAM</b>		
Schedule a meeting and use other forums to explain the project and why you are undertaking it.		Make certain your employees understand the importance of the project, including the cost involved. If they are not supportive, it could sabotage your project or prolong it unnecessarily.
Appoint a champion for the project.		This avoids duplication of effort and demonstrates the importance of the project.
<b>GATHER BASIC DATA</b>		
Identify the main functional areas of the business.		Production, sales, order processing, administration, transport, testing and so on.
List the people in each area and the operations they perform.		Keep this at operations level i.e. not specific tasks e.g. book keeping rather than answer phone, prepare monthly statements etc for an administrative person.
From this information create: 1. An <b>organization</b> chart 2. A set of position descriptions		
<b>DEVELOP QUALITY PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL PROCESSES</b>		
Develop quality assurance practices around all the operations that critically impact the business.		Critical processes are those that effect productivity or customer relations OR that waste manager/supervisor time e.g. constantly answering the same or similar question.  For each area and operation list what needs to be documented ( <b>use The Critical Business Processes And Records form</b> ).
Procedures are matched to industry best practices for quality assurance procedures.		Check what are considered best quality control practices within the industry and develop yours in line with these. For information on what is best practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check trade journal articles</li><li>• Take tours of other firms' plants or retail outlets</li><li>• Talk to other SME business people at trade shows and meetings</li><li>• Ask a business adviser about what best practice information is available</li></ul>



DOCUMENT QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
Document the quality assurance procedures concisely in clear language.		<p>Procedures should be clear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write instructions the way you would say them</li><li>• Include all of the information required for a competent person to complete a given task but don't over elaborate</li></ul> <p>Construct a template for recording policies and procedures so they are developed consistently. As well as a description of how the task is done a procedure document should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Title and date for identification and version control</li><li>• Employee responsible for seeing the operation/task is carried out – usually the supervisor (position, not name)</li><li>• Who does the task (position, not name)</li><li>• Objective; what the policy/procedure is meant to achieve</li><li>• Records to be kept as part of the task</li></ul>
Involve your people in writing the policies and procedures.		Use their detailed knowledge of systems and processes and have the procedures checked for accuracy before promulgating them.
EMBED QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES IN OPERATIONS		
Train people in quality assurance processes.		<p>Ensure everyone who will be involved in the way the new process is performed attends the training.</p> <p>Develop a list of training sessions and people (including owner/managers where appropriate) who need to attend.</p> <p>Develop a training schedule and notify employees of what they will need to attend and the details of when and where.</p> <p>Decide on how the training will be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training can be <b>organized</b> /run by in-house experts or outsourced to specialists</li><li>• Some processes can be trained using commercially available video products</li></ul>
Make a copy of the appropriate documentation available in each work area.		
Include in performance review discussions.		Develop a procedure for dealing with any issues that arise – extra training for the employee, modification to the process etc.

**MONITOR AND CONSTANTLY IMPROVE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES**

Encourage ongoing feedback and amend procedures as appropriate.		Implement regular team and management meetings to discuss how the procedures are working in key business areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business plan</li><li>• Customer complaints</li><li>• QA systems audit procedure problems</li><li>• Personnel issues</li><li>• Supplier problems</li></ul> Create avenues such as notice boards, mail box drop, electronic notice boards, segment of team meeting etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Formally acknowledge all suggestions.</li><li>▪ Create incentives to offer suggestions.</li></ul>
Set a schedule for a periodic review at which to seek feedback and revise procedures.		

**AUDIT COMPLIANCE WITH QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES**

Ensure that once the instructions are in place, that they are being followed and are appropriate.		Develop a schedule for periodically checking that tasks are being performed according to the policies and procedures in place.  Task checking: ask the people responsible for completing the task to demonstrate what they always do. Check that all steps are carried out according to the procedure and observe any records that should be kept, (e.g. a written order), and make sure that all necessary details have been recorded according to the instructions  Process checking: follow a particular job from start to finish. Use a simple audit checklist to ensure you have looked at the most important tasks along the way.
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