



TriMetrix®HD Quality Orientation

Quality Orientation

A person's affinity for seeing details, grading them against a preset standard, and identifying flaws.

Why is this skill important?

Having a good Quality Orientation is directly related to your preference for paying attention to detail. Whereas attention to detail is more a measure of how capable a person is of appropriately seeing detail, Quality Orientation measures a person's proclivity for achieving such accuracy as well. Quality Orientation answers the question, "How much of a desire do you have to ensure quality?"

People who have a strong Quality Orientation will have an underlying desire to constantly evaluate things at a subconscious level, and to compare them to a predefined set of standards. These standards can be external factors—things like management deadlines, company requirements, or quality manual instructions. Or, they can be internal—things like your own assessment of how well you should perform a task, how important it is for you to fill in forms correctly, or how many new customers you think should meet in a week.

People who aren't strongly quality-oriented don't have an inability to see details. Rather, they lack the motivation to ensure that the quality of work is up to par—in other words, they don't use their innate ability to see details and pay attention to them in a way that positively affects the outcome of a project. These people either don't understand standards that have been set by other people (external standards) or they aren't capable of using their own judgment to set such standards for themselves (internal standards).

The good thing about Quality Orientation is that it isn't a skill that you either have or don't have. Instead, Quality Orientation is a practice that you can develop when you understand and appreciate its importance in the workplace.

So why is a Quality Orientation so important? Who are you competing against? It makes sense that you would need to measure up to external standards, but what if they seem unimportant to you? What if no one is checking your work? Who cares if you have a set of internal standards?

Having a strong Quality Orientation is essential for the following reasons, among many others:

1. It enables you to do your best work.
2. It lets other people know that you consider your job important.
3. It helps you avoid mistakes that can sometimes be costly.
4. It gives management confidence that you will give every project your best effort and achieve accurate results.
5. It helps you meet goals that you have set for yourself.

What are skills associated with Quality Orientation?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Quality Orientation:

- Has an innate interest in meeting or exceeding internal or external standards.
- Measures him/herself continually against his/her own recent best.
- Admits mistakes and works to avoid repeating them.
- Implements quality procedures and monitors them regularly.
- Seeks to make improvements to every project or process he/she is involved in.
- Treats "exceeding expectations for quality" as a personal mission statement.

How do you develop your own abilities in Quality Orientation?

- Be detail oriented—pay attention to systems, structures, plans, and progress.
- Don't skimp on quality just to save a dollar or two.
- Follow the rules. If you break them, have a very good reason for doing it!
- Consistently ask yourself if you have exceeded expectations.
- Always seek to understand management and customer expectations.
- Implement total quality management (TQM) and continuous improvement routines.
- Seek customer feedback.
- Document processes and audit them regularly.
- Keep good notes on your activities and meetings so you can refer back to them.
- Have a good filing system.
- Learn about practices in place at leading competitors' offices—benchmark yourself against them.
- Stay abreast of industry developments and seek to implement best practices you learn about.

- State your own expectations clearly for any project team members or staff with whom you are working.
- Measure yourself against not only your competition, but against your own previous best efforts.
- If you find a problem or a bad process, implement corrective actions ASAP.
- Keep records of customer comments and complaints, and look for trends in them. Try to address any shortcomings and encourage good behaviors.
- Seek ISO compliance or other quality certification that is relevant to your business or industry.
- Gather quality documentation from company and personal sources into one place for easy reference.

Quality Orientation

Activities

Activity 1: Pretend to Be a Customer

How do your customers perceive the products or services you offer? What could you be doing better? "Pretend" to be a customer for your company. Try to experience your company from the outside pretend to be searching for services or products that your company offers. How are you greeted? How quickly are you served? How is the customer service? How do people react to questions or comments? Are the processes streamlined and effective?

Activity 2: Market Dominance

Do some research into your competition look up your company's top three competitors on the Internet and at the library. Look in trade publications' databases for mentions of your industry. Network with peers at other companies. If you aren't the market leader in your industry, pay close attention to the company that does claim that title. See what you can learn about how things are done at the competition.

1. How do your peers do their jobs?
2. What is different about their attitude and approach?
3. What is the same?
4. Why do you think your company ISN'T the market leader?
5. What can you do to help it achieve that status?
6. What improvements can you make to how you do your job—just to make it easier for you or take advantage of new technologies or industry trends?

Activity 3: Dissection

Dissect the recent project you and your team completed. Gather the work team together for a brainstorming/discussion session. Analyze the project from a QUALITY ASSURANCE perspective. What did you do in the best, most efficient manner? What did you do less effectively? What inaccuracies existed? How can you improve your quality approach in the future?

Activity 4: Quality Assurance

Think about how quality assurance plays a role for the following companies. What does a good quality program help them with? What would happen if they didn't maintain quality controls?

1. McDonald's restaurants
2. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
3. Exxon/Mobil
4. Black & Decker

