

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR QUALITY FROM THE MARKETING ASPECT

Abstract

Marketing can be comprehended as a business conception striving to find a balance between the interests of two relatively antagonistic forces: customers on the one hand and the firm's management on the other. From the customer's point of view the production quality is understood as a product quality together with the service quality. The firms which offer to customers the product quality and simultaneously the quality of services are always winning in the competitor's fight.

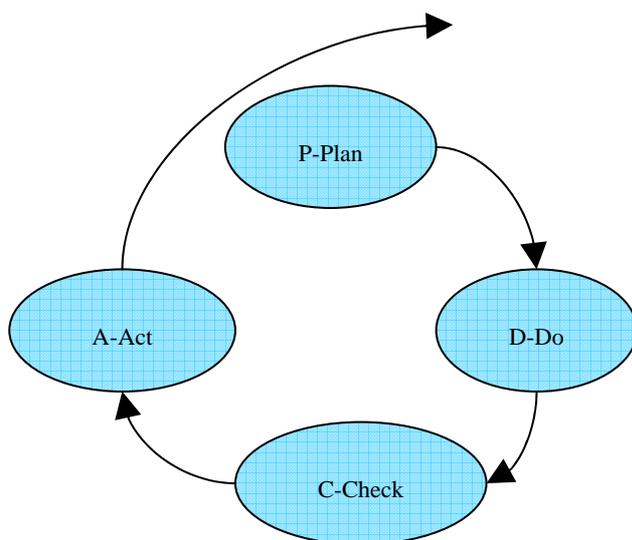
Key words

customer, quality, marketing

Introduction

The concept of quality has become the today's phenomenon in the real sense of the word. More and more executive workers (without exception of state administrative and local authorities, schools, etc.) have to accept the fact that it is not an up-to-date phenomenon of the boom phase of economy which must be simply waited out, but an inevitable tool for all business subjects who want to survive in the violent competitive struggle. In practice, old-fashioned stereotype approaches to quality must be substituted for a quite new view based on the proactive attitude of the whole organization and of all employees to this problem.

The majority of management systems applied in practice is based on Dr. Deming's management model which includes four phases.



The first phase comprises the planning of activities and measures based on the obtained data, information and outlined strategic goals.

These activities and the introduction of scheduled precautions are implemented in the second phase.

The third phase is distinguished by a control of fulfilling the plan.

In the fourth phase, an evaluation of the performance of the whole managerial system based on identified drawbacks and the new knowledge is performed.

Subsequently, the requirements arising from the system's evaluation will become the foundation for planning. The system managed in this way leads to achieving the continual improvement in all activity

spheres (quality spiral).

Picture 1: Deming's model

The above-indicated managerial system became a basis for a set of standards published by the International Standard Organization (ISO) in 1987 as international ISO standards of the order of 9 000. Their application became a start in enforcing the Quality Management System (QMS) which intervenes in all firm's activities. It does not relate only to a narrow circle of employees engaged in the quality (technical controllers, employees of experimental laboratories, etc.), but practically to all employees in a firm because each of them has a share in the influence on the final product or service quality.

The main problem in introducing managerial systems into practice is that the management is often inflexible and influenced by the past practices of the time in which the philosophy and management culture proceeded from other principles, the structure of company planning resulted from produced volumes, and the quality assurance was a second-class matter. However, an introduction of the functional system of quality management cannot be only the next administrative measure. If the system is to be efficient it should comprise all the firm with its components established already on the qualitatively new level.

The production quality is usually defined as a complex of characteristics and features demonstrating the ability of products to satisfy users' requirements. The fact to what extent the customer's expectations and views are fulfilled by an offered product is one of the most important factors determining the purchasing behaviour of consumers, especially when the emphasis laid on price by customers on choosing their products is getting lower. Independent institutions occupied with the evaluation and comparison of products and services enable customers to gain better information and, at the same time, to influence the quality of the product, its safety, price, promotion methods, and the ecological convenience. In the last period it is just the production quality which has become the more explicit aspect requested by customers on buying their products in the market.

For many years, the quality has been, for the most part, associated with the material outputs of production enterprises. Since the product quality is connected with the fulfillment of customers' requirements, it cannot be attributed only to achieving certain technical parameters because the term of quality incorporates also many other aspects. In the course of time the growing industrial production influencing a decrease of the environmental pollution has enforced customers to lay stress on the requirement of the ecological standard of products. An increasing number of firms have found out that their customers want to know whether their products, production processes, and the general firm's policy and behaviour take into consideration environmental consequences.

Every consumer evaluates market products, either consciously or subconsciously, and compares their quality and utility in relation to price. The greater the emphasis on the ecological suitability of products evaluated by customers i.e. on the ability of products to keep the undamaged environment during their production and application, the more business subjects are forced to orientate towards environmental market requirements. An insufficient care about the environmental protection decreases the business activity value and undermines the competitive ability of a firm. From the viewpoint of customers the ecological standard has become one of the important aspects of quality and this trend must be respected by all firms which want to survive in complicated competitive conditions. Nowadays an increasing number of large and successful firms are adopting the strategy of the permanently sustainable development and working out strategies useful not only for the environment but also for an inflow of profits.

Marketing in quality systems

Marketing can be comprehended as a business conception striving to find a balance between the interests of two relatively antagonistic forces: customers on the one hand and the firm's management on the other. A primary goal of the professional marketing is the orientation to a customer and the satisfaction of his needs, which is in agreement with the

management of quality; this suggests that the interconnection of thoughts of the management of quality and marketing is very close.

The objective of marketing is focused on the formation of the most effective and permanent relationships with customers and also on the development of the abilities and knowledge which would promote the achievement of such relationships. In accordance with this philosophy the firm's competitive ability is not based exclusively on the price competition but on the firm's ability to ensure the respective value for a customer.

From the customer's point of view the production quality is understood as a product quality (received by a customer) together with the service quality (submitted in the way of delivering the product to a customer). According to the results of some investigations it has been ascertained that as many as two thirds of customers pass over to the competition because of their dissatisfaction with producers' services. Their dissatisfaction is understood as a feeling of the insufficient personal attention or of the attention missing the necessary quality. As a less important reason for joining the competition is considered by customers its more advantageous price offer or finding a more convenient product.

The firms which offer to customers the product quality and simultaneously the quality of services are always winning in the competitor's fight.

On the basis of the practically verified principles of forming the successful relationships with customers the American consulting firm Forum Corporation has worked out the fundamental rules, the observation of which will help the organization to establish the well-integrated firm which can offer the good product and service quality in the market. They very often form an element which is missing in the firm and which may imply - in conditions of the fierce competitive fight - the transition of customers to the competition and the threatening of its existence.

The principles should briefly include:

- **The necessity to form in the firm a clear idea on how the customers should be maintained**

This idea has two basic functions: on the one hand, it serves as a source of inspiration and on the other, it unifies all departments of the firm participating in the achievement of the common target. If the top management succeeds in persuading all employees about its future efforts and if employees agree with its ideas, then a good network of people trying to achieve the mutually interconnected goals will be formed.

Both the good idea and the orientation to a customer are basic assumptions of building the successful firm and, at the same time, of building the direct route to competitive advantages. Without the good idea employees have only the small inspiration to achieve the highest degree of efficiency.

- **The necessity to listen to customers**

The listening to customers is the most profitable mode of managing the firm in a customer-tailored way. The best managers and all best employees in the firm never refuse to listen to customers.

- **The learning from successful firms**

Even the best firms should continually learn a lesson from winners, i.e. from their best achievements taken as a standard which should be overcome

- **Giving a free hand to the best employees**

The successful entrepreneurs provide such conditions for their employees in order that they might experience the best services. The good manager should consider each person as an internal customer in his working team. This fact leads to the satisfaction of employees, to the good work for the benefit of the customer and to the great profitability of the firm as a whole.

- **The removal of barriers to activities which are appreciated by customers**

It is a frequent practice that systems embedded in firms create barriers to good services provided to employees. It is paradoxical that the bigger and more coherent is the firm, the more and more is the customer pushed in the shade. The firms can take some steps to eliminate the barriers in the business activity by changing a style of the management.

- **The measurement of results and comparison with the best firms**

Every measurement is also an occasion to focus attention to the fulfillment of customers' wishes. The well-elaborated programme of measurements has many advantages. The measurement of the requests of customers and of everything which is provided to them will stimulate the firm to contemplate about the critical factors of success and about the main elements for their achievement.

Conclusions

Customers, especially in the economically advanced countries, lay a more and more greater stress on the quality and ecological suitability of the purchased production. However, producers should consider a growing receipt of information by customers who want to know whether or how the quality aspects and the ecological values were incorporated in their production programmes, processes, products and in their packages, and whether the firm's culture is based also on these values.

The successful firms are not occupied with the advancement of relationships with customers and nor with the quality improvement of their production only in the interest of a rapid achievement of profits, but mainly because of their conviction that such a behaviour is the only correct approach for a firm which wants to act in the market successfully and over a long period of time.

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