

## **Creativity and Innovation Leads to Quality and Independence**

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Quality is defined as “desired properties or characteristics of an object, process or a person”. In manufacturing, it means “fitness for use”. As Noriaki Kano<sup>(1)</sup> says it has two dimensions: "must-be quality" and "attractive quality".

It is obvious that there are two sides;

- An object, process or a person with some properties or characteristics
- Customer's or people's desires. These may be needs or expectations or just anything he/she would love.

Satisfying customers desires is of primary importance but there is another factor that must be kept in mind; “Stakeholders other than customers”.

Other stakeholders which affect and are affected by activities also have desires about the properties or characteristics of the object, process or person. If these properties or characteristics meet only the expectations of customers without satisfying the desires of other stakeholders than the latter ones will contribute less and in time the properties or characteristics will not be sufficient to satisfy even the customers.

The only way to offer quality is to identify the actual desires of customers and other stakeholders and satisfy them.

Today, new technologies are emerging consistently, products, processes and services are improving, product lifetimes are getting shorter, ideas are copied very quickly. Today's customers are more sophisticated, demanding and volatile. They have unprecedented choices, knowledge and power. They expect more in terms of newness, quality and price and if they don't get what they want, they simply move away.

Things that were valid yesterday are not valid any more. The only way to survive is to keep in pace with the speed of desire changes. Meeting standards and specifications is not enough to satisfy the customers. “Must be quality” and “attractive quality” has to be served together. The ones who can keep in step with the speed of change in desired properties and even sometimes go ahead of them become quality leaders and quality champions. They are preferred by customers. A very big group coming after them use the doors and paths opened by them, they follow their footsteps and thus become the second choice of customers. Leaders and champions go hand in hand with change of desires and find ways to satisfy them. The second group can only supply the desired properties and specifications after some time.

Properties desired by customers and stakeholders are always defined by single words. All of these words end with the same two letters; “er”. The difference is in the letters written before “er”; “faster”, “easier”, “lighter”, “higher”, “.....er” and “.....er”.

The letters written before “er” also form a word with a meaning. When only the first part of the word is considered, i.e. the part of the word without “er” (fast, easy, light, high) the situation is not so very hard because, “the most attractive value” of the property is already achieved by quality leaders and champions and is the latest development.

All you have to do is to learn the things done and how they are done. And when you learn them, do the same things and try to get the same result. It is possible to buy technology and know-how and it may also be possible to copy or imitate the things done by using available resources. The reproduction or the imitation will also satisfy the customers. This is exactly what is done by the big majority all over the world.

The act of introducing something new is known as “Innovation” and it is the most important factor in getting successful results. It is not possible to prosper in the market without following and applying the latest developments. If the properties are way behind the “the most attractive value” of the desired properties, than that means there is no quality and there is no chance of success. There can be no top quality without innovation.<sup>(\*\*)</sup>

Innovation is a must, but is it enough? I guess not. Being innovative does not necessarily mean being creative. Innovation can also include the adaptation of existing products or creations created outside the organisation. There are two kinds of innovative applications;

- a) Creativity (Developing a new product or process idea) + Taking Risk = Innovation  
(The conversion of an idea into a new product or service)
- b) Adaptation of existing products or creations (min. risk)

Theodore Levitt<sup>(4)</sup> defines creativity as “thinking up new things” and innovation as “doing new things”. So it is possible to do new things without thinking up new things.

The hardest thing in satisfying the desires of customers and other stakeholders is to find a solution to the complete word, i.e “.....er”. “e” and “r” are the critical letters, because “er” is not known yet. At the moment no one knows “what to do”, “how to do” and “what to use” to accomplish “.....er” that will satisfy the desires. The sacred word is “creativity”. Creativity followed by innovation is the key factor in producing “top quality”.

The ones who research customer’s and other stakeholders’ initiatives and desires rather than guessing them, the ones who evaluate them correctly and find ways to satisfy them are “quality leaders”, “quality champions”. They are the ones that produce “the top quality”. But in Today’s World “.....er” spreads very quickly, it is learned in a very short time and is copied by followers. “Temporary monopoly” does not last long enough. The new developments reshape the desires and people start to ask for a new “.....er”.

The most important characteristics of world quality champions are their creativity and innovation. They are creative and innovative in all aspects of business; in technology, in material reduction, in minimizing production and service costs, in streamlining transactions, in improving deliveries, in fostering positive customer relationships, in after-sales services, etc. That is why they are able to get continuously improving excellent results.

The only chance for innovative followers who lack creativity is to follow or imitate the creative and innovative ones. They obey the rules dictated by quality champions and apply their standards, specifications and receipts. Innovative followers can also satisfy desires and be successful, but are always under the influence of the leaders. Leaders and quality champions are the ones who build the future and the ones who rule and the others will always be under their influence and never be independent and free.

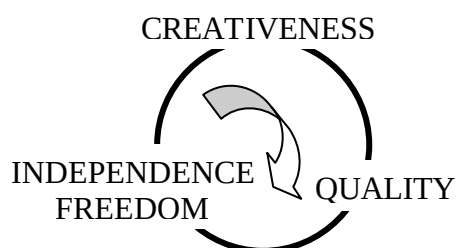
Names like; John Pemberton, Caleb Bradham, Richard Drew, Allen K Breed, Lew Hewitt, Arthur Fry, James T Russell, Douglas Engelbart, Ray Tomlinson, Dr. Steven Trokel, Tim Berners Lee, Giorgio Fischer are not known by most of the people. They surely made very big differences in our lives. Without them, there would be no Coca Cola, Pepsi Cola, scotch tape, air bag, sliding automatic doors, post-it, digital CD, mouse, e-mail, excimer laser for vision correction, www and html, liposuction in our lives or at least they would be in our lives after some time. The innovative leaders introduced their creations to the public and the public accepted them all with satisfaction. They are all quality champions who produce “top quality”. Today many innovative followers are producing these products and services by using their receipts and rules and are satisfying the desires of customers.

Creativity and innovation is also seen in sports and arts. It is possible to name thousands of people who with their creative and innovative approaches produced content, satisfaction and admiration i.e they produced quality. Beethoven, Elvis Presley, Beatles, Picasso are only four of the very well known masters in music and art. Ulrich Salchow (Swedish figure skater who established a record by winning 10 world championships for men (1901–05, 1907). In 1909, first landed a jump in competition and since then it is known as the Salchow jump.), Richard Fosbury (In 1968 jumped 2.24 m in Mexico City Olympic games and won the gold medal. His style instigated a revolution that changed the art of high jumping forever. His revolutionary high-jump style is now the Standard.) are two of the many creative and innovative names in sports.

Creative and innovative artists and champions are also imitated by their followers. The ones who can make what they have done also produce quality and are able to satisfy desires but still use their methods, their receipts and follow their footsteps.

Creative and innovative ones are independent. They produce quality with their own rules and standards. They are the ones who found the last “.....er”. The rest of the world will have to apply their rules and standards or be able to find the new “.....er”.

Creativeness and independence are two faces of a coin. Without one of them the other one can not exist and each one of them build the other. Creativeness leads to quality and independence but on the other hand it is not possible to be creative without independence and freedom. These three factors form a loop.



To become independent and to produce quality independently you have to be creative and innovative. For creativity to grow;

- Generate trust
- Create an environment of innovation
- Create a flexible organization
- Be open - open to outside ideas - open to partnership

- Value diversity across viewpoints
- Build an infrastructure that encourages communication
- Involve everyone and give them chances to succeed
- Risk & tolerance mistakes
- Provide career and skill development opportunities
- Understand customer and stakeholders' desires and trends
- Learn from the experience of the best innovators
- Get as much information as possible about technology
- Create leaders and improve leadership
- Finance innovative projects

Don't forget;

The most creative one is also the most independent. It has all the freedom to create and has created the top quality. The ruler of the universe is still doing and will do the same.

(1) Noriaki Kano

Dr. Noriaki Kano, Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Science University of Tokyo President, Japan Society for Quality Control. Noriaki Kano, Shinichi Tsuji, Nobuhiko Seraku and Fumio Takahashi, *Miryokuteki Hinshitsu To Atarimae Hinshitsu (Attractive Quality and Must-be Quality)*, "Quality", Journal of Japanese Society for Quality Control, Vol 14, no. 2 (Tokyo: Japanese Society for Quality Control, 1984).

(2) Not true for situations where costumers demands are conservative. Famous example is "wine".

(3) Theodore Levitt

Is the Edward W. Carter Professor of Business Administration Emeritus at the Harvard Business School and former editor of the Harvard Business Review. Professor Levitt is the author of "The Marketing Imagination" and also author of numerous articles on economic, political, management, and marketing subjects.