

The Influence of Dr. Deming in QFD — part 3 of 3

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Analyzing the Voice of the Customer

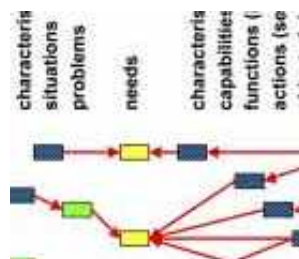
Customers do not always give us clear statements of need. Customers are untrained at requirements giving. They have no tools or techniques to fully explore their requirements space. They are average at articulating what requirements they are aware of. You will not get a complete set of requirements from any customer, ever. Further, even if customers could, you don't have the time or resources to do all their requirements anyway.

Fortunately, you don't have to completely fulfill all the customer's requirements to satisfy the customer. But to understand why this is the case, we must understand:

1. the relative effect on customer satisfaction of doing certain types of requirements;
2. the relative importance of the customer's requirements, and;
3. what those 'requirements' are.

In [Modern QFD](#) we take a very different approach to exploring and then engineering requirements. We ask customers to define "value" by telling us problems they face, by identifying opportunities they cannot currently seize, and by revealing things that make them look good to others. These become the starting point for further analysis. A good QFD practitioner should be able to distinguish customer problems from complaints or problems and customer opportunities from product features or solutions.

Regardless of how the customer expresses himself, his words or behavior must be analyzed for greater breadth and depth of meaning. Modern QFD tools can translate these customer verbatim to product attributes. Key to a successful QFD process is focus on a critical number of customer needs. The key needs of the customers should be prioritized and deployed in the **Maximum Value table**. In Design for Six Sigma (DFSS) and Design for Lean Sigma (DFLS), this is called the $Y=f(X)$ transfer function. If more detailed analyses are required, the HOQ and other tools would be deployed .



For example, the **Customer Voice table** (diagram on the right) is the modern QFD tool which is used to translate any customer input into customer needs, which are then prioritized and deployed into solutions and quality assurance activities by a cross-functional team.

These various tools are linked in an end-to-end system that can be replicated across different market segments, product lines, and product generations, can be used to predict the effects of quality decisions on customer satisfaction and competitiveness. It can be used to document product and technical knowledge, and aid in the training of new employees, as well.

Thus, [Dr. Deming's teachings](#) were transformed by the Japanese to carry the quality message to all operations in an organization. When applied to new product development, they called it Quality Function Deployment. As business conditions have changed, QFD has adapted to become faster and more customer focused.

The modern **Blitz QFD**® approach uses several [new tools](#) to understand how to design new products and services that address key customer needs. In the global Internet economy of the 21st century, customers have more choice than ever, and success will come to those businesses that make the effort to understand their customers, regardless of where they are located.

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