

Commentaries on the Culture of Organizations and Managing with Quantitative Information

(Compiled by Matt Jans¹)

Survey methodologists are not the first to confront the challenges of managing operations with process data (i.e., paradata in our context). Insights can be drawn from management icons like W. Edwards Deming and Kaoru Ishikawa. While these quotes were developed in the contexts of manufacturing and industry, they are applicable to various aspects of survey management.

W. Edwards Deming's advice from *Out of the Crisis* (1982)

"Create consistency of purpose toward improvement of product and service. Aim to become competitive and stay in business, and to provide jobs." (Point 1)

Deming speaks to the need for strong leadership defined by focus on executive goals that are driven by an ethic of process improvement. For survey researchers that might be being known for the highest quality survey on a given topic.

"Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the company." (Point 8)

Deming is emphatic about the need for open information flow and communication in organizations. If employees are fearful of management or imposed quality standards, they will not speak out when errors or inefficiencies are noticed.

"Eliminate slogans" (Point 10)

Slogans, such as "Quality is our Goal!" may re-assure stakeholders, but Deming is skeptical of their role in actually influencing quality. If a process is flawed, quality cannot be obtained even if every staff member believes in quality as an ideal.

"Eliminate work standards (quotas) on the factory floor. Substitute leadership." (Point 11a)

"Eliminate management by objective. Eliminate management by numbers, numerical goals. Substitute leadership." (Point 11b)

Deming warns that setting production targets without understanding the variability in a process leads to low-quality results and waste. Rather than manage individual staff on productivity goals, Deming suggests substituting leadership in the form of mentoring and advising.

"Institute leadership. The aim of supervision should be to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job. Supervision of management is in need of overhaul, as well as supervision of production workers." (Point 14)

Despite his support of Walter Shewhart's original process control charts, Deming's primary message about the needs of organizations seems to be about leadership. To make an organization run more efficiently and produce higher quality products, Deming would advise hiring and training leaders over reliance on statistical assessments of performance.

¹ This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Ishikawa & Lu's Advice from *What is Total Quality Control? The Japanese Way* (1985)

"Make clear the responsibility of top management over quality assurance. Equip your company with a solid system of quality assurance" (p. 127)

"Top management must assume leadership in bringing about a breakthrough" (p. 128)

Ishikawa emphasizes the need for upper management to take a clear and directed goal toward quality improvement. The development of a quality assurance system is one of those steps.

"If you delegate authority freely your subordinates will use their abilities to the fullest extent and grow in their jobs." (p. 132)

Managers should delegate authority not just tasks, which nurtures the development of leadership. Managers may need to avoid an urge to micromanage to feel in control. If a "solid system of quality assurance" is established, then managers can rely on the system and will feel freer to delegate authority without losing control. Ishikawa advises managers to move beyond a "traffic cop" approach to management, which requires managers to be present and active in every decision and action, directing the moving parts themselves. He says that one metric of true leadership is if an operation can run smoothly even when the manager is not present.

"Don't always look to the top when working." (p. 133)

Ishikawa advises managers to look to their own processes or operations rather than focusing on "what upper management wants." Unless upper management has set a strong tone and trajectory for quality assurance, management priorities can be fickle and executive initiatives can change over time. Managers need to anchor their work to the goal of increasing quality in their own area regardless of these changes. The point can also be interpreted as advice against climbing the corporate ladder for its own sake and instead focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of systems under a manager's own control.

"The key to success is to look into the future. The president must look 10 years into the future, the director five years, the division head three years, and the section chief must look at least one year into the future." (p. 136)

Different roles require different distances in forward scope, but all employees need to be looking into the future, whether it is tasks that need to be done next week, next month, next year, or beyond. The further up the chain of command one rises, the further they need to look into the future to insure success of the organization.