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COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A
TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT
PLAN

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

September 1, 1992

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COMMITTEE ON TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

REPORT

Introduction

The Committee on Total Quality Management was established by the Legislative Council at its May 14 meeting as a vehicle for complying with "Resolve, to Implement Total Quality Management Procedures in State Government" (Resolves of 1991, Chapter 73). That Resolve, which emerged from the recommendations of the Special Committee on Governmental Restructuring, charges each of the three branches of government with the responsibility for developing "a management system that emphasizes total customer satisfaction and the importance of front-line, rank-and-file workers in the improvement of production or services".

Total Quality Management -- or TQM -- is a management approach that was initially developed in the 1920's and 1930's in private industry. TQM has since gained private sector converts throughout the world and has, only recently, been introduced in the public sector as a method for achieving positive change. Although many state legislatures are intrigued by its potential, no other state legislature has yet actually embarked on a TQM process; thus, Maine and the Legislative Council are charting new territory.

Unlike traditional management approaches, TQM seeks to infuse quality throughout the organization's processes of creating a product or service. Fundamental to this approach is the principle that every organization consists of a series of customer - supplier relationships and that improvements in the quality of an organization's products depend on examining and improving those relationships.

The Legislative Council's initial decision to appoint a committee to pursue the development of a total quality management plan reflected consensus among Council members that legislators and legislative staff offer a wealth of knowledge and expertise and should be directly involved in this process.

TQM Committee Structure and Process

Pursuant to the Council's action to establish a special committee, the Council Chair appointed a committee of 14 members. The appointments reflect the Council's commitment to incorporate one of the basic principles of total quality management into the Committee's structure - that is, that effective management relies on the knowledge, skills and experience of people at all levels in the organization. Thus, the Committee's legislative members include members of leadership, a Committee Chair, and members of the "rank-and-file". They are drawn from both political parties; they represent "veteran" legislators and those completing their first term of office; and they include members who have chosen not to run for re-election, as well as those who hope to continue their legislative service. Legislative staff appointed to the Committee include representatives from the Senate and House and a representative from each of the non-partisan staff offices; although they include senior managers, not all of the staff members have management responsibilities.

The Committee met for the first time on June 24 and has met five times to date. In addition, two subcommittees have been formed to focus on specific issues that have emerged from the full Committee's work: a Subcommittee on Committee Rules and Procedures has met once, and a newly-formed Subcommittee on the Legislative Confirmation Process will have its first meeting in September. Both the full Committee and the Subcommittees have had staff support from two members of the non-partisan staff.

In its initial meeting, the Committee focussed on developing a grasp of the major principles of total quality management, of the assumptions underlying it, and of the primary differences between a traditional approach to organizational change and the TQM approach. Because most of the actual experience with TQM has been in the private sector, the Committee concluded that it would be essential to adapt the "textbook model" to both reflect and to build upon the unique characteristics of the legislative branch. Thus, the Committee extracted four TQM principles to use as a framework for its own work. These are:

- Improvement in the quality of the Legislature's products is dependent on improving the communication between "customers" and "suppliers" at all levels.
- The most effective improvements are those that focus on prevention, not inspection or review after the fact.
- Total quality management is a process that pursues improvement on a continuous basis.
- Quality is everyone's job.

Recognizing that the "adaptation" of a process is very different from the simple adoption of a process in its entirety, the Committee concluded that the best way to develop an effective structure and process for guiding TQM in the Legislature was to develop a two track approach. In addition to developing a plan for institutionalizing TQM in the Legislative branch, they decided to apply TQM principles through the actual pursuit of "continuous improvement" in one or more specific areas. In order to identify these specific areas, the Committee attempted to develop a comprehensive list of the Legislature's customers and its suppliers, both internal and external (see Attachment A).

After a preliminary review of the list (with the conclusion that everyone is a customer of the Legislature!) and a review of some of the major issues related to each customer group, the Committee decided to focus on the consideration of the Legislature's joint committees as a customer group. This decision derived from the TQM Committee's conclusion that the Legislature's joint committees are the primary vehicles in Maine's legislative process for scrutinizing, debating and modifying legislation that is introduced. In addition, joint committees are the major access point for direct citizen involvement and input into the legislative process. Thus, the public perception of the entire legislative process often turns on their assessment of joint committee proceedings. Finally, Committee members felt that they could contribute more in this area than in some others: virtually every member of the TQM Committee is either a member of a joint standing committee, staffs one, or provides some other direct support to the joint committee process.

The Committee then focussed on developing a detailed perspective of the Committee-as-Customer, defining the following:

- The Committees' major suppliers;
- The products each supplier provides -- and that committees need in order to perform their work;
- Improvements in these products, or the customer/supplier relationships, that have already occurred as the result of previous "improvement" efforts;
- The current status of committees' relationships with each of their suppliers; and
- The unmet expectations and need for improvement in products and/or the relationships.

The recommendations that follow have emerged from the committee's two track approach of developing an implementation plan while simultaneously apply TQM principles in a specific area. These recommendations reflect the Committee's initial analysis of the relationships among the joint committees, their customers and their suppliers in the legislative process and a review of their own TQM Committee process. Applying the principle of continuous improvement, the TQM Committee will continue to examine these relationships.

Recommendations

Each TQM committee member had a connection to the Legislative committee process. As they discussed their individual experiences, the members recognized that differences in the application of committee rules and the variety of committee procedures increased the complexity of the legislative process. Simplifying and standardizing committee rules and procedures became the Committee's first priority.

The committee also identified specific areas for improvement related to the Joint Rules, the Legislative Confirmation Process and the after-deadline bill process. Finally, the committee had recommendations regarding the future of TQM in the Legislature. The committee's recommendations are enumerated below.

Joint Standing Committee Process

1. Modify the present Committee Rules of Procedure to distinguish between rules and procedures.

The distinction is that rules are uniformly applied across all committees, while procedures are recommended but can be modified by committee action. Once adopted, committee procedures also must be applied uniformly within the committee to ensure that every member of the public is treated with dignity and fairness.

2. Standardize committee rules and procedures that promote public and legislator access and increase committee effectiveness.

A subcommittee continues to work on a final draft of the revised committee rules and procedures. Examples of agreed upon recommendations include:

- A rule permitting anyone who wishes to speak the opportunity to do so, although it may be necessary to limit the amount of time for testimony on a given bill;
- A rule requiring that the committee, through its clerk, attempt to notify a bill's sponsor of the time and date of the bill's scheduled work session;
- A rule permitting committees, under certain conditions, to begin public hearings or work sessions once 5 or more committee members are present; and
- A procedure for committees to develop and post tentative work session schedules.

Publication of Rules and Procedures

3. Introduce the revised rules and procedures to committee chairs and rank-and-file members with the strong support of the Legislative Council and the Presiding Officers.

To accomplish this recommendation, the Committee further recommends:

- Mailing of the revised rules and procedures to legislators one week before the 116th Legislature convenes;
 - Expanding orientation for new and returning legislators to the revised rules and procedures; and
 - Scheduling a special meeting to provide the presiding officers and committee chairs an opportunity to discuss the revised rules and procedures;
 - Incorporating the committee rules into the Joint Rules.
4. Publish committee rules and procedures to enhance participation by the public and rank-and-file members.

Include the rules and procedures in a handbook for committee chairs, a handbook that describes the legislative process to the public, and on flyers made available in each committee room.

Legislative Confirmation Process

5. Continue the work begun by the committee to address difficulties in the nomination/confirmation process.

The committee has identified several issues surrounding the nomination/confirmation process that require consultation and thoughtful discussion. Those issues include time constraints, the number of confirmations required, background checks, dealing with negative information and confidentiality. A new sub-committee, devoted to studying these issues has been appointed and will begin meeting in mid September.

6. Modify the notification letter sent to nominees subject to confirmation.

Include with the letter a brief outline of the confirmation process and the address of a single repository for letters of recommendation. Replace the letter's current signature with that of the appropriate committee chairs.

After-Deadline Bill Process

7. Clarify the after-deadline bill process.

Distribute explicit criteria for after-deadline bill approval and an explicit description of the process for submitting after-deadline bills. Post the Legislative Council meeting schedule.

The Future Of TQM In The Legislature

8. Continue the strong and active support of the TQM committee by the Legislative Council.

The success of TQM initiatives depends upon the sustained support of leadership. It is important to continue to have Council members sit on the TQM committee.

9. It is important for the TQM Committee to submit periodic reports to the Legislative Council.

These reports should briefly update the Council on TQM progress, make additional interim recommendations and report the results of the committee's monitoring of implemented changes.

10. Maintain the present TQM committee structure and process.

The membership agrees that the present TQM committee structure and process are effective. The committee found that the use of subcommittees increased the number of individuals and groups involved in the process while simultaneously gaining their expertise, understanding and support. An added benefit was the ability to work on more than one project at a time.

Membership on the TQM committee requires substantial time and commitment. There are long meetings that often require thoughtful preparation. The Committee feels that it may not be feasible to maintain the same level of effort that has characterized the first phase of its work during the First Regular Session. At the same time, it is important for the Committee to meet regularly even after the Legislature has convened, to maintain continuity and to monitor the implementation of recommendations. For example, the committee will need to determine if the proposed changes in committee rules and procedures make a difference.

11. Provide participants in the public hearing process with an opportunity to express their opinions about and perceptions of that process.

The committee plans to conduct regular, periodic surveys of the public and joint standing committee members. The purpose of the surveys is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the present legislative process as experienced by those two customer groups. This information will be shared with committee chairs and leadership.

12. Explore methods to increase understanding of and access to the legislative process.

The committee has tentatively identified the areas where it will focus in the next phase of its work:

- The legislative nomination/confirmation process;
- The development of materials describing the legislative process; and
- The orientation process for new legislators.