Letters to the Editor

Quality Can't Be Forgotten

Dear Editor:

After reading Professor Eagar's article (entitled The Only Constant Is Change) in the December 1995 edition of the Welding Journal, I find that I must comment on some of the items that were in his article.

There was one of the 200,000 or so steel workers who lost their steel making job in the '80s. To me it was a blessing in that it gave me an opportunity to explore new companies in which to grow. I have worked in basic manufacturing, aerospace, advanced electronics and automotive. During this time, it became very apparent to me that companies who did well had several things in common. After reading Professor Eagar's article, this commonality was not apparent. Quality, as related to world-class manufacturing, appeared missing from the article. Without a complete and robust quality system that ensures JIT with decreasing cycle times, the manufactured goods would surely not get to market. With it, the goods are manufactured correctly.

The other item that appears to be hidden somewhere within the article is that world-class manufacturers focus on satisfying their customers (whether they are) internal, external or whatever. The focus on the customer is still there. Where would the likes of Motorola, Corning, and Fed Ex be, to name a few, if they did not focus on their customers? Quality is an integral part of manufacturing and to play down the importance of quality is misleading. You may wish to read Deming's Out of the Crisis to really gain an appreciation for what quality is all about.

I also question Professor Eagar's seven qualities all engineers should have. If we were to follow this by not including the quality sciences, wall building would be at its highest. The modern engineer must have a working knowledge of the quality sciences and must focus on his customers. Additionally, along with the quality sciences aspect, the engineer must know, and more meaningfully, understand the manufacturing process. Process capabilities must be understood, and the key to process capabilities is the quality sciences. With this knowledge, the engineer becomes a quality, reliability, process and design engineer rolled into one. His scope is broadened. His understanding now becomes more meaningful to his customers, thus meeting or exceeding his customer's expectations.

In order to accomplish this, the education must be expanded to include this training within the engineering curriculum. I have found in recent times that current engineering curriculums do not address the quality sciences adequately. Worse than that, major business schools apparently do not include the quality sciences in the B-school curriculum. Therefore, the decisionmakers have very little, if any, understanding when addressing a quality-related concern. One of the biggest pitfalls that a company can fall into is one where quality concerns are not addressed and resolved in a timely and completed manner. This leads to a perpetual quality crisis scenario that promotes failure-ridden companies. The educational process must promote quality in the forefront in order to keep businesses profitable.

Dennis J. Palcheisky
ASQC Certified CQA, CQE and CRE
Orchard Park, N.Y.

Mr. Palcheisky makes several important observations about quality and customer satisfaction in his letter concerning my article on "The Only Constant Is Change." I would not and could not dispute his comments on the importance of quality or customer satisfaction in today's successful manufacturing firm; after all, arguing against these would be like arguing against motherhood or apple pie. For my thoughts on quality I would refer him to another article which I published in Materials Evaluation, 51(10), 1993, p. 1184, entitled Evolving Manufacturing Practices: Lessons for the Quality Control Engineer.

On the other hand, the purpose of my December Welding Journal article was to address the forces causing change, not to address the response that many are using to adapt to this change. In addition, my audience at Henniker was the welding R & D community, not the manufacturing community. Quality and customer satisfaction are two of many responses, but they are not the only responses nor are they the panacea that Mr. Palcheisky suggests. The total response is much more complex than he suggests in his letter.

The seven qualities which all engineers should have that he criticizes were developed by operating and manufacturing leaders at Boeing Co. The attribution in my manuscript was omitted from the table when published. The listing includes "a basic understanding of ... manufacturing [and] customer needs." Since quality is part of modern manufacturing and a focus on customer needs is essentially the same as customer satisfaction, his criticism that they were omitted from my article is unfounded. I agree that they were not the focus of my article, but they were not the purpose of this article. If Mr. Palcheisky wishes to submit his own article on quality and customer focus to the Welding Journal, I am confident that the editors will give it due consideration.

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ASQC Certified CQA, CQE and CRE
Orchard Park, N.Y.

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed the well-written article on Indy race cars entitled Aerospace Metals Land on the Brickyard in the December Welding Journal. It brought back old race car memories when you interviewed Dennis Klingman and his saying, "Car repairs are made less often than in former times."

Part of this observation could be traced back to the days when the Peck Welding Award was started in 1976. It was continued for 13 years, ending in 1989. Originally, a $2000 award was given for the best welded design and also featured superior welding craftsmanship.

The Cecil C. Peck Co., Cleveland, Ohio, under the direction of Orval Strohl, was the donor of this award. To offer this sum, an informal committee was formed. It was named the Speedway Welding and Fabricating Committee. This was often referred to as the Peck Award.

Besides Strohl, members of the original committee were M. D. Van Steenwyk, of Peck, a former midget race car builder; Herb Kanch, former plant manager, Allison Div., General Motors Corp.; and Leonard Wechsler, metallurgist and member of the Speedway Old Timers Club. We also had Bob Stone from the Indy Chamber of Commerce. Helping out was Jack Beckley, chief steward of technical standards, as an unofficial 500 adviser. I served as chairman and secretary.

These days, the thought of safer and stronger welded construction in championship race cars is the focus of all of us in welding.

Harry F. Prah
Prah Engineering Co.
AWS Past President (1985-86)
Indianapolis, Ind.

Roosevelt’s Words Offer Inspiration

Dear Editor:

I read with interest the article on William F. Behnke, Jr., the December featured member for Behind the Mask.

At the end of the article, the reference is made to the quote "The Man in the Arena" as the credo followed by Mr. Behnke when he needs a boost.

I am also boosted by this quote, which appears in many forms and rather than being "anonymous" in authorship is from the writings and speeches of our 26th president, Theodore Roosevelt.

I just wanted to set the record straight.

Larry Trask
Advertising Specialist, Materials Evaluation
Columbus, Ohio
Member, Theodore Roosevelt Association, Inc.

Race Cars Need Welding’s Best

Dear Editor:

The Welding Journal encourages an exchange of ideas through letters to the editor. Please send your letters to the Welding Journal Dept., 550 N.W., LeJeune Rd., Miami, FL 33126, or FAX them to (305) 443-7559.