

Being a member of CQI

We are advised by the great and the good that when asking people to take part in any endeavour we should perform the WIFM test .i.e. put ourselves in the place of the other person and ask "What's in it for me?"

Members make a number of contributions not least of which is the annual subscription. If we apply the WIFM test to member's subscription the most valuable benefits arising out of the 2009 member's survey were:

- Quality World magazine (97%)
- CQI Web site (96%)
- Continuing professional development (95%)
- Body of quality knowledge, (93%)
- Professional recognition (92%)
- Qualifications (92%)
- Monthly newsletter (91%)
- Web site forums and quality network (87%)
- The branch network (85%)

Most people probably join the CQI for these benefits alone but how many of us think beyond this?

If we examine the Royal Charter we will find that the CQI is a charity and charities exist to bring public benefit. Therefore any benefit to members has to be incidental, not our *raison d'être*. Our mission statement is in the Royal Charter and it is stated thus:

The objects of the Institute shall be for the benefit of the public to advance education in, knowledge of, and the practice of, quality in industry, commerce, the public service, and the voluntary sector.

It is worth considering for a moment why the Institute should want to pursue such a mission. If we had been content with the knowledge we had gained about inspection after WWI, the Institute would no longer exist. We therefore need to advance education and knowledge to survive, but do we need to do it for public benefit or simply for the benefit of our members? All professional bodies in our peer group are registered charities putting public benefit above self interest and our members would not gain the professional recognition they clearly value if we operated differently.

So who do we think within the CQI is going about advancing education in, knowledge of, and the practice of, quality for public benefit? It is the staff in central London or it is the membership as a whole? As members, we ought to be interested in the answer to that question because if the Institute fails to achieve its mission and is judged by the Charity Commission to be providing benefits only to its members, we will lose charitable status and our Royal Charter which is vital for gaining professional recognition.

For Quality World and the CQI web site to be of any benefit to members it has to contain information of use to them. Where do the members imagine this useful information comes from, who creates it and presents it in an attractive format? Professional recognition arises from a bona fide body of knowledge, a need in society, accredited qualifications and upholding professional standards. Who do the members imagine does the research, compiles that body of knowledge and keeps it relevant to the changing environment in which our members work, draws up the syllabus and manages its accreditation and regulates the standards? There are 32 branches across the UK arranging events on topics of interest to members but who do the members think chooses the topics, finds the speakers, venues and promotes the events?

For all of these benefits members volunteer their services on a part time basis. They work together with the expert support of the full time staff to deliver publications that are useful in the workplace, a body of knowledge that provides a sound basis for education and training programmes that will in due course provide members with the competence to positively influence those responsible for product and service quality and thus produce public benefit in our society.

There is little point in increasing the competence of our members if the doors they try to open remain stubbornly shut to them. The Institute therefore has another function; that of engaging with an

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increasing number of organizations to influence their leaders in the importance of the pursuit of quality so that they become receptive to quality initiatives and adopt a quality culture. Therefore when members are seeking to influence the quality of their organization's products and services and push on the appropriate doors, they will find less resistance.

If we apply the WIFM test to members contributing to fulfilling the CQI mission we can immediately see the following benefits.

- Current information of value in the workplace
- Qualifications and designatory letters recognized as being on a par with other professionals
- A Body of knowledge relevant to help quality professional influence the quality of their organization's products and services
- Opportunities online and in the local community to share experiences, meet and learn from like minded professionals and bond with mentors

In the 2009 member survey, over 92% of respondents rated recognition of professionalism among employers and peers to be one of the most valuable benefits of membership. The strength of the CQI therefore lies not in a few dedicated staff in the London offices but within the competency of our own members. The choice is yours. If the majority of members choose to contribute to the success of the Institute in a small way, the Institute will grow, it will begin to influence the quality of products and services and bring benefits for all. Imagine a world where the CQI is fulfilling its mission and quality is at the heart of every organization, isn't this a world which you want to inhabit rather than a world where hardly anything goes to plan, where breakdowns are inevitable, where they still dig holes in a road a week after it has been resurfaced at taxpayers expense and where you hear politicians say "we will ensure it never happen again" but it always does.

In conclusion there would appear to be no option. If you want the kind of Institute that will help you get recognition by employers and your peers, become successful and make the world a better place in which to live, you have to do more than simply take the immediate benefits of membership. You have to contribute and here are just a few of the things you can do.

- Attend local branch meetings and make the events more successful
- Join the Branch Committee, get involved and make new friends
- Write articles or technical papers for Quality World
- Participate in the online forums and blogs, make your views known and make a difference
- Volunteer for positions on various Boards, Panels and Committees, use your leadership skills and influence the future direction and strategies of the Institute
- Volunteer to contribute to the Body of Quality Knowledge and add ideas, techniques and approaches that have worked for you and your organization
- Volunteer to join the membership team assessing new/transfer applications and increase the credibility of our community
- Become engaged in the development of national standards related to quality and get the sort of standards that bring real business benefits
- Represent the CQI on external committees and promote our profession in national and international forums.

The recognition members receive and the quality of the information and of the other services they receive depends not only on their continued subscription but to a large extent their engagement in the processes within the Institute that enable it to fulfil its mission. Your active participation is therefore vital for the Institute to continue to meet your expectations.