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Total Quality Housing Project at UW

In August 1994, the Housing Department at the University of Waterloo commenced a Total Quality Management (TQM) project. Our objective was to look at all aspects of our activity through a systematic analysis of our Business and Student Life operations. Through this process we introduced our Managers and Supervisors to the eight key elements of Total Quality: planning, management leadership, continuous improvement, employee involvement, customer focus, statistical thinking, process model, and measurement and control

Commencing in September, the Managers and Supervisors met with Dennis Beecroft, Managing Director, Institute for Improvement in Quality and Productivity, a University Research Centre, and Dr. Gary Waller who is a faculty member in the Department of Psychology. The team building workshop included formal training on the importance of service quality, the costs of poor quality, definition of quality, project identification and team selection. These workshops involved discussions on our customers, services we provide and where we feel we should improve. This initial group numbered twelve Managers and Supervisors. It included the Director, Business Manager, Residence Managers, Residence Superintendents, Residence Life Manager and Supervisors.

The group split into two teams to develop

a list of problems that a team could consider. Developing this list was quite a challenge for us. With the assistance of our facilitators, we came to realize that often what we tended to focus on were symptoms. We needed to be more concise! We also found ourselves prematurely attempting to solve these "symptomatic" problems. We used a Priority Ranking Matrix to rank the problems each team identified. The matrix consolidated the two independent lists.

We compared each problem with all the others on the two lists so that the most desirable one was selected. Using this process we chose a problem that fell within the area of Staff Relations and in particular, "scheduling." It focused on our cleaning services staff of which there are sixty-five across four residences.

From this group we created a Process Improvement Team to study the problem. The team's composition was Residence Superintendent, three Housekeepers and one Janitor. The scope of the project included two of the five residences at Waterloo. The Managers defined the project goal, scope and issues to consider. We learned that it is very important to establish solution constraints for the team. For this project these included no changes to staff levels, solution budget fixed at \$0 and solution includes only Housekeepers, Janitors and immediate Supervisors.

by Gail Clarke, Business Manager

The team met weekly with a Facilitator. The team established their own rules regarding conduct and attendance. Agendas were provided at each meeting and minutes documented progress. The Managers met with the Team every fourth week for an update on progress. These meetings did not include a debate on recommended solutions. Instead, we were there to hear about the Team's progress and plan of action and act as a resource. We offered any advice, if asked. The team had employed surveys to accumulate information from our customers who ranked various physical areas within the residences according to customer importance. In addition the team split into two groups in order to map the present process of scheduling.

The final report was handed in on March 31, 1995. The team had the additional responsibility to implement all recommendations included in its report. Service quality includes all aspects of what we do in the department. The introduction of quality improvement as a process provides us with the opportunity to examine our current processes; how we deal with our customers; and examine opportunities for innovation and experimentation with a tolerance for risk taking and an acceptance of failure. We will not know the outcome of our first project until the spring at the earliest.

The article EM9516 reprinted above is used in Figure 11.16 of the STAT 221 Course Materials.