

Quality Ramblings...Something for Everyone

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It's time to take a month off from some of the seriousness of the issues addressed in this column. I'll address many areas; some relevant, some not so relevant. Some may be updates on previous comments and some may have no meaning at all. So with that in mind, let's get started.

Did you ever wonder what a "Certificate of Inspection" is good for? If a vendor sends you a certificate stating that the parts were inspected, the question should be: "So what?" What is really needed is a Certificate of Conformance.

When we look at the issues, to what extent does it really matter if mainstream statistical methods or Taguchi methods are used to perform experiments? Do we argue the point past the level of reason only to forget that the goal is to perform experiments in a factorial manner, which is superior to the one-factor-at-a-time method of experimentation? Yes, that is my own comment!

Is it true, as one quality professional put it, that the Howitzer effect is the propensity of the quality professional to get blown out of , his or her area when an unpopular decision is made that negatively impacts the almighty schedule?

I read more and more about Dr. Demings's impact on American industry. Can you paraphrase 3 out of his 14 points? Phil Crosby also has a 14-point process. Is the number 14 cosmic?

Does it bother you, as much as it bothers me when someone sends you a letter to sell you a quality product, and they spell your name wrong?

Why is it, when someone asks for 100 percent conformance to requirements, everyone looks at that person as if he had a pumpkin sitting on his head and responds that 100 percent perfect parts is not achievable? The statement does not ask for perfect parts, just conformance to the requirements.

After hearing a few times in a short period that certain parts are close enough to ship and accept, I begin to fantasize just how much fun it would be to make every paycheck \$100 short one week. I would tell everyone that I knew the checks were short, but felt they were close enough. The message might be fun until I lose consciousness from being pounded into oblivion.

I ran across an old scrap of paper that addresses the issue of continually striving for personal improvement in the workplace. It reads: "The Paul Principle. Individuals often become incompetent at a certain level (at which they once performed quite adequately)

as they become uneducated at that level." If you know who is responsible for the quote, let me know so I can give proper credit.

Why do we use the Greek alphabet in statistics? It seems to me that statistics are generally hard enough without another alphabet. Perhaps this is the root of the comment, "It's all Greek to me".

After we get ten years of experience in quality and related education courses, why do we say it's not our responsibility, and only the senior manager can lead us to zero defects? It seems to me that we ought to have the tools to lead the senior manager to help us achieve zero defects. I have James Warren to thank for that thought.

Does it seem to other quality people that manufacturing only seems to ask to have a part rechecked when it is just out of tolerance? Parts just in tolerance are accepted as is.

I would like to see the term Normal Curve replaced by the correct terminology of Gaussian Curve. People seem to think that a normal curve happens when things behave normally, and that a non-normal curve is the result of a problem in the process.

You can forget what you learned in Industrial Statistics 101. The vast majority of distributions industry are not normally distributed. At this time I even hesitate to say most are.

Why is it that sales people, when trying to sell us products such as automobiles, refrigerators, VCRs, etc., always try to sell us the more expensive high-reliability model, and then, when we agree to buy that model, they try and sell us service contracts to protect us from the high cost of repairs when the product fails?

I ran a comparison test the other day. I typed a one-page letter on my four-year-old 80486-based computer in 7 minutes and 56 seconds, including printing. I typed a similar letter on a 25-megahertz Pentium 5 machine in 7 minutes 32 seconds. I think I may have found the limiting factor in my equipment.

A poll in PC Week stated in the headline that users of desk-top publishing equipment named reliability the No.1 product attribute. No kidding!

In my never-ending quest to come up with a concept that will be on the lips of all quality professionals forever and put me on the lecture circuit at \$10,000 a pop, I will try to state the relationship between quality and reliability. Quality is reliability when time (t) = 0. Well, maybe next time.

If quality isn't the buzzword of the decade, I'm not sure what is. I reviewed magazines to see how many of the ads mentioned the word "quality" prominently in the text. In one computer magazine, at least 40 percent of the product ads mentioned quality in bold type. Then I started looking at packaging of products in stores, and it was quality, quality, quality. Next I began seeing it on billboards, envelopes, the sides of trucks carrying the products, etc. Quality is everywhere. The two places I didn't see the word quality dominate the ads was in *Quality* magazine and *Quality Progress* magazine (though some version of the word quality is in the names of most of the represented companies).

I no longer feel like the Lone Ranger in discussing the inappropriate uses of Cpk. Quality Progress, which is sent to all members of the American Society For Quality, Berton Gunter had a series of columns on "The Use and Abuse of Cpk".

If you don't feel that the quality field is becoming specialized, ASQC currently tests, and has certifications for, Certified Reliability Engineer (CRE), Certified Quality Engineer (CQE),

Certified Quality Engineer in Training (QEIT), Certified Quality Technician (CQT), Certified Mechanical Inspector (CMI) and Certified Quality Auditor (CQA) as well as others. For more information contact the Certification Department of ASQC at (414) 272-8575.

If the sample size is large enough, anything can be shown to be statistically significant. But even though something is statistically significant, it may be of no importance from a practical standpoint. Don't confuse statistical difference with practical difference.

Why do football announcers continue to say things like "the ball is on the 45-1/2-yard line?" There is a 45-yard line and a 46-yard line, but there isn't any 45 1/2-yard line. Best one I have ever heard was that the ball was on the 6-inch yard line.

Remember, if you have a 50-50 chance of being right, nine out of ten times you will be wrong. How many times do you grab the correct string on your drapes?