

**CAB Training Cards
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Quality Circles

1. Quality Circle (QC) - Defined

A Quality Circle is a small homogeneous group of about 5 to 10 employees, meeting regularly to identify, analyse and resolve work related problems, with the management philosophy of creating a truly participative work environment for improving quality of products and services. The first quality circle started at the Nippon Wireless and Telegraph Company in Japan. In India, Quality Circle Forum of India (QCFI) is promoting quality circles.

2. Benefits of Quality Circle

1. Quality Circles emphasize harmony, team work and cooperation for ensuring improvement in terms of reduced defects, wastages, reduced costs and scheduled improvements.
2. They make necessary recommendations to management for improving productivity and quality. They also watch the implementation of accepted suggestions.
3. Quality Circles have two complimentary features: firstly, they provide an educational and learning process; and secondly, they facilitate the participation of workers in decisions concerning their daily work. This provides a basis for mutual cooperation between management and workers.

3. Operation of Quality Circle

According to Joseph R. Jablonski, the various aspects of Quality Circle operations are as under:

1. The membership of Quality Circle is voluntary. It has a leader and a facilitator or coordinator.
2. The selection of the leader is left to the members of the circle.
3. The facilitator is nominated by the management. He/She is responsible for the development and successful working of the quality circle programmes. He/She guides, assists and encourages the quality circle. He/She must be a high

official in the organization so that he/she can act quickly. It would be desirable to have a full time facilitator in a large organization.

4. A quality circle normally focusses its attention on problems concerning productivity and quality. The subjects may cover a wide range of topics, such as work simplification, training, reduction of process time and technological innovations. It will not, however, discuss grievances, wages and salaries, appointments and promotions.
5. A steering committee may be formed, which will decide questions of policy regarding Quality Circles and formulate operational guidelines such as frequency of meetings, whether they should be held on company time, or not. Various heads of departments should be represented on this committee, with the Chief Executive as the Chairman.
6. A code of conduct should be evolved and strictly abided by. For instance, all achievements will have to be treated as group achievement.
7. Periodically, say every three months, the QC will present a report to management indicating the problems it has studied and its solutions.
8. Management will have to evaluate the suggestions carefully and take appropriate action promptly. A committee may be constituted for the purpose.

4. Common Reasons for failure of Quality Circles

Quality Circles need very careful nurturing. Some of the common reasons which can hamper working of a Quality Circle are –

1. Autocratic management showing lack of faith in the workers.
2. Resistance on the part of middle management.
3. Failure to appreciate and reward constructive suggestions promptly.
4. Poor Quality of communication at different levels in the organization.

References:

1. Quality is Personal – Harry V. Roberts & Bernard F. Sergesketter.
2. Implementing TQM – by Joseph R. Jablonski.

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