Unit 7 - Quality Control Skills
Case Studies

1. Total Quality Management on the Web
SCENARIO

Mo, Raquel, Molly, and Sal started a new business online, and they believe they have a successful idea that will become young, rich dot-comers. Their customers (or lack there of) don't share their enthusiasm for their online business. Something needs to be done now since competitors lurk.

CRITICAL THINKING

Can you look at the concept of Total Quality Control (TQC) and find a way to help them? Remember that they are heavily invested emotionally in this web site and have been resistant to changing it. Imagine you are a consultant. What can you say to them, and how can you say it to them?

2. "Houston…We Have a Problem"
SCENARIO

In 1999, the $125 million Mars Climate Orbiter mission failed because of communication skills gap between two groups of scientists. According to NASA, the spacecraft team and navigation teams were using different units of measurement. One team of scientists used English measurement units, while the other team used metric measurements. Because NASA didn't detect the error, the orbiter came only 35 miles above Mars' surface instead of the 90-mile distance that was planned. Consequently, scientists think, the spacecraft burned up in the thin atmosphere.

CRITICAL THINKING

This problem represents a breakdown in managerial control. What kind of thinking would have prevented this problem? How might this costly error have been prevented?

3. Basic Accounting Tools—First-Line Management Systems

Sandy knows the basic accounting equation—assets equals liability plus equity (or A = L + E)—but it has never made a lot of sense to her. Debits and credits work because she learned to handle them, yet the concept of accounting, as a managerial tool, just had not entered her mind. Her boss has asked her to explain to her fellow workers what this equation means, and why it is important to managers.

CRITICAL THINKING

What can you do to help her? What does the equation mean to a sharp manager? Once she grasps what the equation is all about, how can she explain it simply and clearly to her fellow workers?