

Quality contribution to the success of Social Responsibility Programs

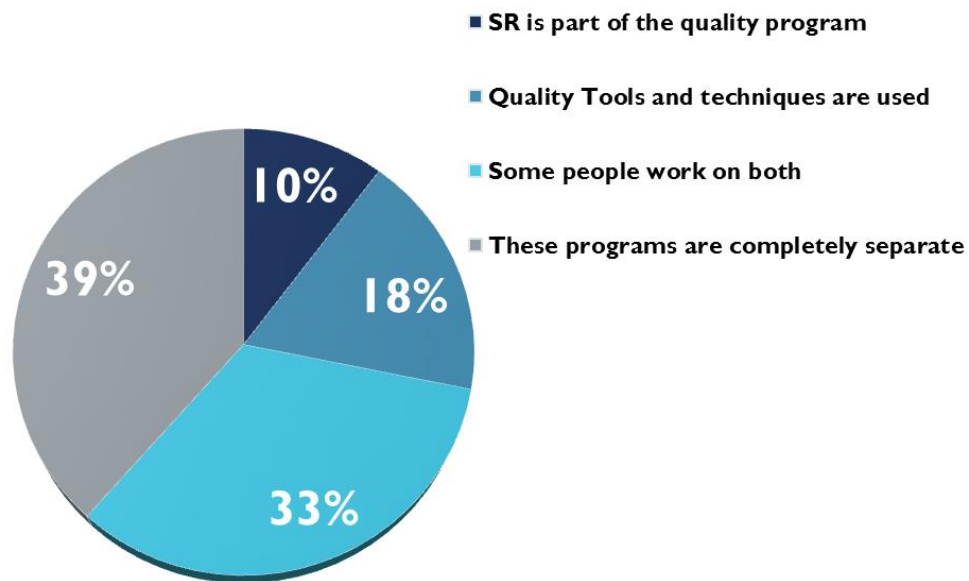
Notwithstanding the increased popularity of the term "sustainability", the possibility that human societies will achieve environmental sustainability has been, and continues to be, questioned—in light of environmental degradation, global warming, overconsumption and societies' pursuit of indefinite economic growth in a closed system.

Defined as the impact of an organization decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behavior, Social Responsibility or SR in short, is becoming a real and permanent force in business and is receiving increased attention from customers, investors, employees and governments. SR current trends focus on addressing a range of responsibility, accountability and “sustainability” challenges.

In this context, organizations worldwide are seeking to become more “Socially Responsible Organizations” (SRO,) hence responding more clearly and strategically to amplified stakeholders’ demands on this front. Consequently, the concern over incorporating sustainability and social responsibility into the business agenda of organizations has increased significantly.

A research paper on Quality and Social Responsibility published by ASQ/ IBM in 2012 put the light on few facts (www.theSRO.org), among which:

- Only 16.4 % of SR programs have been initiated by Quality Professionals.
- SR is part of the quality program in only 10 % of the organizations surveyed.
- SR programs were 42.9% somewhat successful when integrated with Quality Programs against 14.3 % only when no integration existed.



Quality and SR: A key business Strategy for Enhancing Competitive Position, ASQ/ IBM- 2012.

The current development of the SR movement illustrates a strong parallel with the evolution of Quality. Early on, looking at Quality as an opportunity, rather than a cost, was a difficult encounter. Later on, when realizing investment in Quality paid off, Quality leaders thinking out-side the box expanded quality management beyond product into behavior.

After this mindset transformation, Quality Movement and Quality Professionals are nowadays very well equipped with tools that are much needed for long-term planning, system integration, convincing investors of the added value, transparency and target settings. However, so far the quality professionals have had limited interactions with the SR efforts. In this context, the question to address is: how to tie up the pursuit of Excellence with the pursuit of Social Responsibility?

The conceptual approach for quality and available supporting tools to analyze the nature of the world behavior, build employees empowerment and organizational capabilities, with a focus on continuous improvement and reduction of errors and wastes, are much needed for the SR movement for its integration into the core business practices, benchmarking and monitoring improvements and hence maximizing SR investment. In return SR provides a new focus and a unity of purpose enabling us, the quality professionals, to evolve quality in the 21st century language.

In conclusion, as social responsibility becomes increasingly more important to decision makers in examining the future impact of today's decisions and activities on the environment, community and stakeholders' perceptions, the role of quality becomes central in helping organizations to grow in socially responsible ways. Quality professionals pursue a continuous journey towards Excellence and any outcome of quality improvement projects can only be "socially responsible" with a positive impact on the bottom line and a professional alliance between both movement is much needed. Good quality practices make for SRO.

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