

BOB KRONE's QUALITY ESSAYS

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"Creeping Corruption"

One purpose for these Quality Essays is to document places needing more quality thinking and applications by quality professionals. ASQ members can take justifiable pride in the achievements of the Quality Sciences since their creation after WWII. Humans everywhere on Earth have benefited. Those benefits started with manufacturing, across industries, then moved to services, then to health care and to education. Productivity advances for business and government were results of quality management and tools. Our world would be a far worse place if the pioneers of the Quality Sciences had not initiated their research and leadership.

One area not yet adequately penetrated by the Quality Sciences is "Corruption". When "Corrupt" is used as an adjective it means "utterly broken." Quality Pioneer Philip B. Crosby said, two weeks before his death on 18 August 2001, "Quality boils down to one word - Integrity." It took decades for Crosby's Zero Defects concept to be taken seriously. In 2010 too much business and government have failed to prioritize moral leadership, integrity and honesty. The result has been stalled or declining quality. My four decades in Management Education have convinced me that leadership is the number one variable for success and that moral leadership is the most important function of leadership.

Quality programs have not stopped global terrorism; drug cartel criminal actions in Mexico; dishonest personal attacks in U.S. Political campaigns; corrupt journalism; business fraud, poverty; unemployment; homelessness; even starvation. Global resources are being consumed by those societal illnesses rather than going to help their victims and those devastated by human or natural caused disasters. Ten months after the Haiti earthquake, on 12 January 2010, one million people remain homeless and in need of healthcare. There is a growing cholera epidemic and, to add more misery to disaster in that small country, as I write this essay on 3 November, Tropical Storm Tomas is threatening. More than one million people were advised to leave Port-au-Prince by disaster officials, but they had nowhere to go. There has been no quality in Haiti since January 2010.

Creeping corruption is a cancer that, if not stopped, reaches a point of irreversibility. Dr. W. Edwards Deming, in his 1982 book *Out of the Crises* wrote: "The greatest waste in America is failure to use the abilities of people" (p.53). If corruption and fraud are allowed to spread, it will destroy quality through failure to identify or use the abilities of people. Integrity, ethics and moral leadership should be the top criteria for advancement to leadership.

Many international organizations research Corruption. Transparency International publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index that compares corruption worldwide. Global witness campaigns against natural-resource related corruption and human rights abuses. The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) is the Council of Europe's organization that monitors States' compliance with corruption standards. The Independent Commission Against Corruption of New South Wales was created in 1988 to investigate, expose and minimize corruption in the New South Wales public sector. The United Nations Institute for Social and Ethical Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical Business are dedicated to identifying organizational impact socially, environmentally, economically and on human rights.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality award (MBNQA) of ASQ has added "Governance and Social Responsibility" to its leadership criteria. In 2006 ISO 26000 – Development of Social Responsibility Standard, began. That standard involves social and ethical dimensions, finance and economics, legislative issues, leadership, liability and sustainability. ASQ wants to help organization leadership to avoid or stop creeping corruption. But as of 2010 there remains a huge gap between needs and evidence of progress.

Confucius (551 – 479 BC) said it first, "The moral character of those in high position is the breeze, The character of those below is the grass. When the grass has the breeze upon it, it assuredly bends."

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