



Accelerating global quality competition

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A LONG TIME AGO, high quality was something that many people mainly associated with companies and brands from a limited number of Western nations. In the 1980's, therefore, many companies in the West were completely shocked when Japanese competitors managed to compete in quality in a number of important industrial industries. In a short time, the shipbuilding industry, the camera industry and the home electronics industries were crushed. The automotive industry was also heavily affected and large market shares were taken over by Japanese manufacturers. Since then, much has happened in many other countries. We are now facing a situation where quality-related breakthroughs are happening in countries such as China, South Korea and India, which is rapidly creating an entirely new global quality competition.

Sandholm Associates have been providing education, training and consulting on quality in China since 1981. We have worked with several Chinese companies over the years and established an extensive network in the country. This has given us a unique opportunity to closely

follow the systematic and purposeful quality development that has taken place in the country. A development that in many ways is very impressive and interesting. Today, there is often a strong commitment to quality and improvement work shown by leaders in Chinese companies. This is also strongly supported by the Chinese state, which has quality, development and improvement high on the agenda.

Similar developments are also taking place today in countries such as India and South Korea. In these countries, development is driven more by individual companies, which in some cases have reached very far. One such example is India's largest company, the Tata Group, which can be regarded as one of the world's best player when it comes to quality development, systematic improvement work and excellence. In addition to these countries, there is also an intensive quality development going on in companies and organizations in many other countries that have not previously been associated with the ability to deliver high-quality products.

This, in combination with the fact that many corporate executives and politicians

in Europe and US have for a long time taken quality for granted, has led to more and more businesses approaching each other in quality. Something that makes a quality-related competition increase in several industries. Businesses that previously competed primarily with low prices are today offering high quality goods and services. Companies that historically have been able to maintain high prices on their products are threatened by new competitors.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to continuously develop your organization's ability to deliver quality. This requires a high level of knowledge regarding continual improvements, quality and excellence. There are many indications that the winners in the future will be the organizations that can best develop both their ability to meet customer needs and the efficiency of their processes. This is not only of paramount importance for the success and survival of companies but may also affect the ability of countries to maintain welfare. A globally accelerating quality competition is a strong contributing cause for this.