

SUMMARY

**Topic: Quality Assessment Forms: The Good, the Bad and the “Magic”**

**Date: December 5 & 6, 2007**

**Participants:**

There were representatives from the following companies on these calls:

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| AAA                                     | IDEXX Computer Systems         |
| Aegon                                   | IDEXX Laboratories Inc.        |
| Auto Club Group                         | ITEL                           |
| Boston Financial                        | Johns Hopkins Healthcare       |
| Coldwell Banker King<br>Thompson        | JPMorgan                       |
| Colonial Life and Accident<br>Insurance | K.Hovnanian                    |
| Community Health Group                  | Lacapital Federal Credit Union |
| Diana Naturals                          | Ohio-Health                    |
| Experienceology                         | Paragon Global Resources       |
| Federated Investors                     | Shea Homes                     |
|   | SummaCare                      |
|   | Wells Fargo Insurance          |

**Introduction:**

Tom Larkin provided a broad picture of the different types of Quality Assessment Forms, reviewing the slides provided prior to the call, details provided below. He then introduced Wally Hauck, business partner of Communico Ltd., and Steve Grande, Client Services officer with Boston Financial, who added their expertise and provided specific examples.

**T. Larkin’s Slides:**

**Quality Assessment Forms: The Good the Bad and the “Magic”**

- **The Good:** The form is a dynamic tool to coach and support people
- **The Bad:** The form is a static (cut in stone) tool to ‘score’ ‘evaluate’ ‘judge’ people
- **The Magic:** The form is used:
  - As a tool to empower associates towards vision driven performance, and
  - As a tool to improve organizational effectiveness by getting at root causes that hinder quality performance

## The Five Pillars for Developing an Effective Service Culture

1. *Shared Vision and Values* - Clear, compelling shared vision and values support and inspire the expression of employee excellence and exceptional service
2. *Service-Focused Leaders* - Leaders at all levels model the service mindset, value the contribution of every employee, and focus on the customer's total experience.
3. *Consistent Service Delivery and Measurement* - The standards for service delivery are clear, consistent and integrated
4. *Developmental Training and Coaching* - Established measures for face-to-face, phone and e-interactions are shared by all. Performance coaching identifies and promotes service contribution and individual
5. *Constant Systemic Improvement and Reinforcement* - Systems and processes throughout the organization are constantly improved and aligned with the service vision and values.

The QA form needs to be put into context. To what end do we use a form? To support people achieving the vision.

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### The \_\_\_\_\_ Form What do you call your 'form'?

- A. Monitoring
- B. Evaluation
- C. Assessment
- D. Coaching
- E. Root cause analysis
- F. Vision Alignment Standard

How we view the form is key. Calling it a monitoring or evaluation form sounds judgmental, not developmental. Assessment is better, coaching is good and Vision Alignment Standard is MAGIC.

You should not be spending more time assessing than coaching.

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### The Vision Alignment Standard

*Linking leadership, strategy and the frontline*

#### Your Standard

- Is it aligned with the vision and strategic business imperatives?
- Does management model and support it?

- Is it easy to assess consistently and quickly?
    - Is it calibrated with other assessors?
  - Do associates understand what its purpose is?
  - Do they view it as objective?
  - Do they “own” it as performance they can choose?
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### **The Standard has great value when:**

- The Standard’s objectivity clarifies expectations  
(It can empower associates to choose their performance)
- A critical mass are delivering on the letter and the spirit of it for others to see/hear  
(It is the “walk” of your talk)
- The Standard is used as a coaching tool and an analysis for individual and corporate performance improvement  
(Associates can hear the difference between a ‘coaching’ conversation and a ‘judging’ conversation)

An effective service culture will aid in training new employees as well. New hires will mimic and adopt the behaviors they see modeled.

Everyone in the organization understands the strategic thinking behind the standard; how it aligns with the vision/values.

Middle management model and support the standard by demonstrating it in their interactions.

Associates understand their delivery of it is a choice and a vital part of the vision. They will demonstrate commitment rather than compliance.

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**Wally Hauck** – presented on root cause analysis and using the QA form in your organization to understand and eliminate problems.

Root cause analysis is a continuous improvement practice; identifying the factors that create symptoms of the problem – discovering what will prevent the problem from happening in the future.

Examples of how to use the QA form to perform a root cause analysis for your organizations:

First Example: if we agree that Management commitment to MAGIC is a key critical factor to having front line workers embrace MAGIC and use it consistently in customer interactions, how can we use the QA form to collect data to determine

## MAGIC<sup>®</sup> LEARNING EXCHANGE

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whether or not managers are using MAGIC in interactions with employees?

Get volunteers from front line and managers to provide feedback on this. Collect data over a month's time, review data, and determine if they are consistently following MAGIC method or not.

If they are not, consider how you can improve that because it is a key factor in having front line workers use it with customers.

Second example: look at the QA form -- what does it tell you about the frequency and types of errors? One instance might be in the use of tragic/MAGIC phrases; they might it be happening more frequently than you would like to see. Gather data over a month and ask why they are using those phrases.

One company learned that the front line workers were concerned about making a commitment to customers as regards delivery of products/services. Their experience was that delivery was inconsistent and they did not want to commit the company or themselves to promises they couldn't keep. They were protecting their own and the company's integrity and used vague terms such as "we will try to get it to you by next week." The company looked at ways that they could be more reliable on delivery schedules and it resulted in there being no need to be vague; reps could make a commitment because they could rely on the system to make deliveries as promised.

**Steve Grande** presented on measurable results you can get when you do use the QA form.

He asked the question: "How does the Vision Alignment Standard drive results for you?"

- Using the standard is very effective way to drive home accountability and performance.
- Business goals are set up by where the individuals fall within the standard.
- QA helps to set up very clear, specific and objective goals all the way down to the CSR and thus the CSR understands what action items he/she needs to work on and what are the goals.
- Multiple calibration sessions are run; they have a paid-for-performance culture; key is tightly knit calibration sessions.
- Phone rep receives feedback from three individuals on a weekly basis; 2 by quality associate, one by supervisor, one by line manager
- Form drives consistency throughout the organization – holds supervisors, front line managers, group managers and CSRs accountable. Steve's performance is measured against the quality report - vision alignment throughout the organization.
- Key is not use the form as a weapon, but rather as a tool to give very clear, objective, specific data back to the phone reps. They made the commitment that they would spend more time coaching than monitoring calls. Their reps

are given feedback on a weekly basis and they get it from more than one person – their supervisor, their line manager and a member of their quality group. It forces organization to drive calibration sessions and ensures consistency.

- His company is rated by the National Quality Review – 3<sup>rd</sup> party rating service that taps into their phone lines, same criteria as used for all other financial services firms – he receives monthly reports on how their performance measures against others in the industry. When they first started using the accountability as described above four years ago, they were rated in the bottom 15%. They are presently rated in the top 25%.

*Question from the group:*

Do you pick and choose the ones that need help more? Do you pull high-performers off the floor to give feedback?

Purpose of form is that it does help to identify concerns but also allows for really collaborative conversations – you can never give people enough positive reinforcement – and they take senior people who are doing really well off the floor and tell them they are doing really well.

Two things critical for improving outcome –

- 1) if you don't tell someone they are doing something wrong, they will continue doing it wrong;
- 2) if you are doing something well and I don't tell you, you may stop doing it.

Tom addressed two other questions received via email:

Auditing consistent with the situation versus the QA form --

Sometimes people doing the assessment are just using the form as a checklist, not really assessing the result of the interaction. The form is intended to drive the vision of the company, but you need to align the form with the vision. The customers are not the ones who create the form – it's the leadership – you don't want to be overly swayed by one customer. So be open to considering/adapting the form in light of the vision and overall customer input.

The way to improve calibration is to make sure that if there is a difference that does not get resolved in the meeting; you frame the problem in the form of a question and present it to the leadership team for resolution. You need to have a Champion or Service leader who will take these decisions.

Calibration sessions are to get everyone more aligned than they were when they walked in. It is a process not an event. Calibration meetings do allow for discussion, disagreement, resolution and agreements to support the organizational goals. The point of a calibration meeting is to get more alignment.

*Question from the group:*

How do you effectively communicate and calibrate when your associates are spread out throughout the field and engaged in face-to-face customer interactions?

You must consider if there is any capacity for the company to do coaching and feedback. Can you do an onsite visit or onsite observation? Can you witness what these conversations sound like?

If you don't have that, it may be the issue. If yes, you may consider adapting the form – perhaps reducing the number of points and making sure they are easy to assess and aligned with vision of the company. You may be able to have the managers make “mystery” calls to clients to obtain feedback if it is not possible for them to go onsite.

Another caller shared how they just expanded their use of the form -- from the call center to other divisions – anyone who had a contact with a customer. They received pushback that it did not pertain to them; they were not a call center. The company explained that the MAGIC program was not just for call centers - you can evaluate any conversation you have and relate it back to the 33 Points. Once this was explained, the managers were on board. They gradually understand that it is not just for call centers, but all conversations.

Tom shared that the QA form is a paradox –looks like a checklist, it's numbered, very behavioral, very objective – implies it is a scoring form. One of the critical factors of QA is to use it for objectivity, clarity; and the clarity is to empower the associates to choose their performance. The more they choose, the more they are in control, the more reinforcement they receive.

Finally, Tom addressed a weighting question received via email. He advised all consider weighting points – you may want to give some behaviors more weight. For example, if you have a 10 point form and if each gets 10 points, you may want to evolve the form based on customer feedback. You may want to increase the weight – if the greeting is very standard and consistent, you may want to give it 3 points; but if you learn that reps are not very empathic, you may want to weight empathy 5, 7, or 9 points. These can change over time – they are elastic, collaborative pieces of a QA form so it doesn't come across as carved in stone but rather allows for movement and adjustment based on customer feedback.

*Question:*

How do you deal with people who disagree on a call calibration? How do you set the standard? Everyone has an opinion and an interpretation?

If form is subjective or too broad, they can create dissension and disharmony, so great value in making them objective. For example, if you say did someone sound empathic, it's open to opinion. However, if you QA states "did the associate use an empathic phrase?" that will be easier to assess. It becomes more black and white. Does the wording of your form create the behavioral specificity that makes assessing easy?

Be realistic – determine where your variance factor is. What can you live with? You want to stay under 10% variance.

*Question:*

Does it count as empathy if people don't use empathic words, just tone, combining it with telling the caller they can help? The inflection of their voice implies empathy though they don't use any empathic phrases. A help statement without a separate phrasing that identifies empathy.

One caller stated they consider it separate. They go on premise that they want to fix the person before they fix the problem.

*Question:*

How did Steve get the management level involved? How did he get people on the same page? How did he get it rolling?

He ran focus groups, asked all the groups the same questions – what do we do really well, what do we need to improve on? This, after finding out answers on his own. Asking reps, how do you know if you are a really good phone rep? Asking managers, how often do you give feedback? Asking probing questions that help direct the outcome. Turn it around to the phone reps, that here is what we are going to do for you – your job won't really change, the line managers and supervisors will be doing things differently - now you will get feedback four times a week. It has gotten to the point where people actually look for the monthly reports. They want the feedback.

*Question:*

One caller doesn't listen to the calls previous to the session; they do it fresh – listen and score it together.

Steve felt that was a good thing to do if you have mature, seasoned coaches who can do that on the fly; can answer the questions that come up. This prevents manager from feeling inadequate in feeling like they should know the answer, from making up an answer and setting back what they have been trying to do.

Also suggestion to let associate select their call to be evaluated or have the quality team sit with the rep and listen in. They are encouraged and receive positive reinforcement – great opportunity to plug in and tell them what a great job they are doing. Everyone gets clear on what they can do; you draw out the high achiever in them. It becomes a choice.