QUALITY ASSURANCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN LAW PRACTICE

By

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OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Quality Assurance and Control
- Impediments to Quality Control - Reality check
- Change Factors
- Responding to Change Factors
- Efforts at Quality Control and Assurance
- Link between Technology, Productivity and Quality Assurance
- Imperatives for Technology in Law Practice

OUTLINE (Contd)

- Which Technology?
- Concrete Gains of Linking Technology with Human Knowledge in Law Practice
- Is Technology a magic wand?
- Conclusion and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

- The increasing ease of *movement of good and services* portends challenge for every enterprise including law practice
- *Clients are increasingly more demanding* and meeting those demands pose challenge to law firms
- Delivering *consistent quality to the clients is fraught with vagaries* which can render quality deficient
- Developments in *knowledge and technology offer not just even more challenges but also solutions* to the law firm trying to compete and meet demands of varied clientele

QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE

The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change

- Bill Clinton

WHAT IS QUALITY CONTROL

Quality control is a process by which entities review the quality of all factors involved in production. This approach places emphasis on three aspects :

- Elements such as controls, job management, defined and well managed processes, performance and integrity criteria, and identification of records
- Competence, such as knowledge, skills, experience, and qualifications
- Soft elements, such as personnel integrity, confidence, organizational culture, motivation, team spirit, and quality relationships.

The quality of the outputs is at risk if any of these three aspects is deficient in any way.

- Wikipedia

WHAT IS QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance, or **QA** for short, refers to a program for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met.

- It is important to realize also that quality is determined by the program sponsor. QA cannot absolutely guarantee the production of *quality* products, unfortunately, but makes this more likely.
- Two key principles characterise QA: "fit for purpose" (the product should be suitable for the intended purpose) and "right first time" (mistakes should be eliminated). QA includes regulation of the quality of raw materials, assemblies, products and components; services related to production; and management, production and inspection processes.
- It is important to realize also that *quality* is determined by the intended users, clients or customers, not by society in general: it is not the same as 'expensive' or 'high quality'. Even goods with low prices can be considered quality items if they meet a market need. QA is more than just testing the quality of aspects of a product, service or facility, it analyzes the quality to make sure it conforms to specific requirements and comply with established plans.
  - Wikipedia

QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE

- Quality Control and Quality Assurance used interchangeably but not same. One is the process of doing things whilst the other is the planned review of the process
- Both ensure and assure that we can do the same old thing consistently
- Entail policies, procedures, competences, culture and systematic actions established by an enterprise for the purpose of providing and maintaining a specified degree of confidence in service delivery or data integrity and accuracy throughout the life cycle of the service or data which includes, input, update, manipulation and output of the service or data

QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE (Contd)

- It encompasses all actions taken to ensure that standards and procedures are adhered to and that delivered services and products meet performance requirement consistently

- It is the process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved

THE REALITY

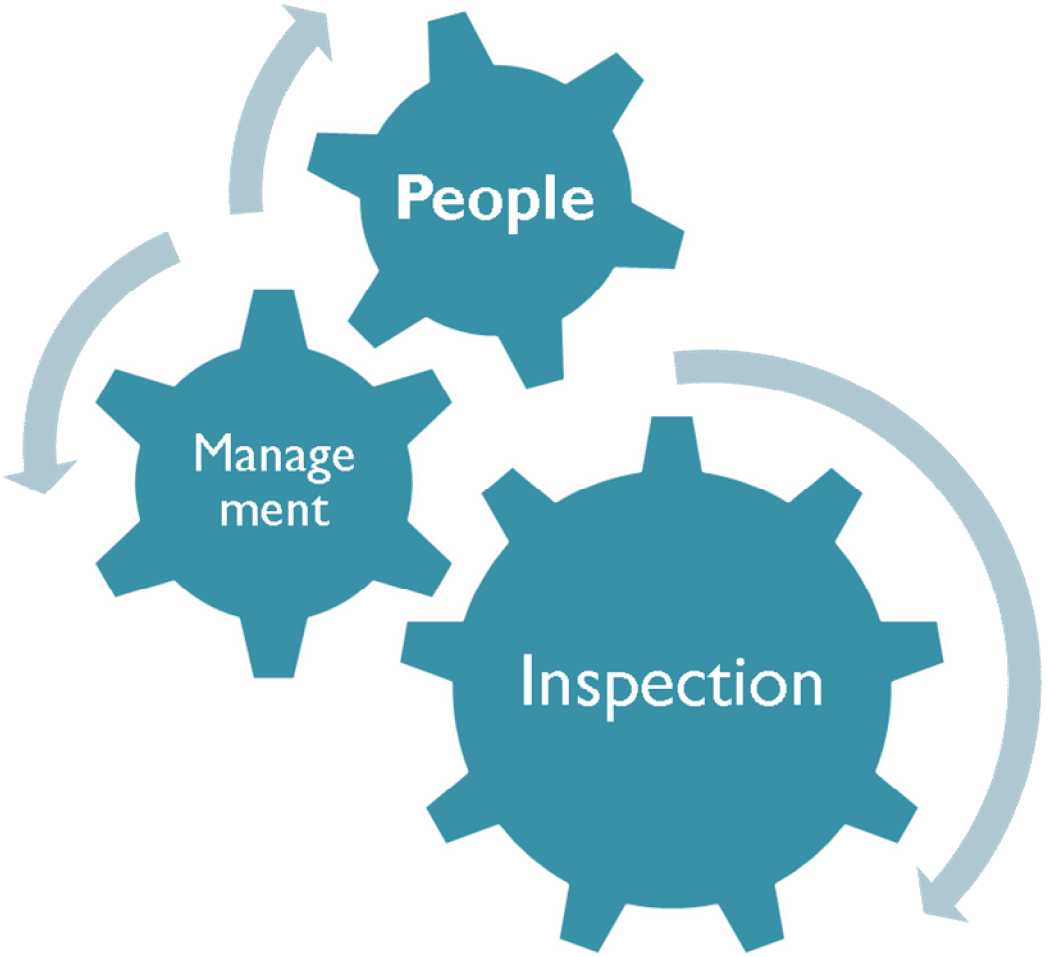
Dog eat Dog

It is not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent, but the ones who are most responsive to change

- Charles Darwin

WHAT DOES MORE PRODUCTIVITY MEAN?
MORE LEISURE AND INNOVATION

IS THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION ADVISABLE NECESSARY OR INEVITABLE



CERTIFICATION FOR LAW PRACTICE ABROAD

- Lexcel Practice Management– Accredited by UK Law Society
  - Is a best practice standard designed specifically for solicitors' law firms
  - Focuses on all aspects of practice management
  - Helps to ensure that legal practices deliver excellent client care and consistently high quality of service
  - Awardee authorised to use the Lexcel logo on their letterhead and promotional literature

- LAW9000- mirrors ISO9001
  - Popular in Australia
  - Focuses on improving day-to-day management of legal practices
  - Quality focused business management system.
  - Specific legal processes including: matter control , client engagement, conflict of interest and termination.

- Perhaps NBA should work with SON to develop an inspection standard for law firms in Nigeria with appropriate certification

QUALITY CONTROL WITH TECHNOLOGY BOOST STAFF CONFIDENCE

IS TECHNOLOGY A MAGIC WAND

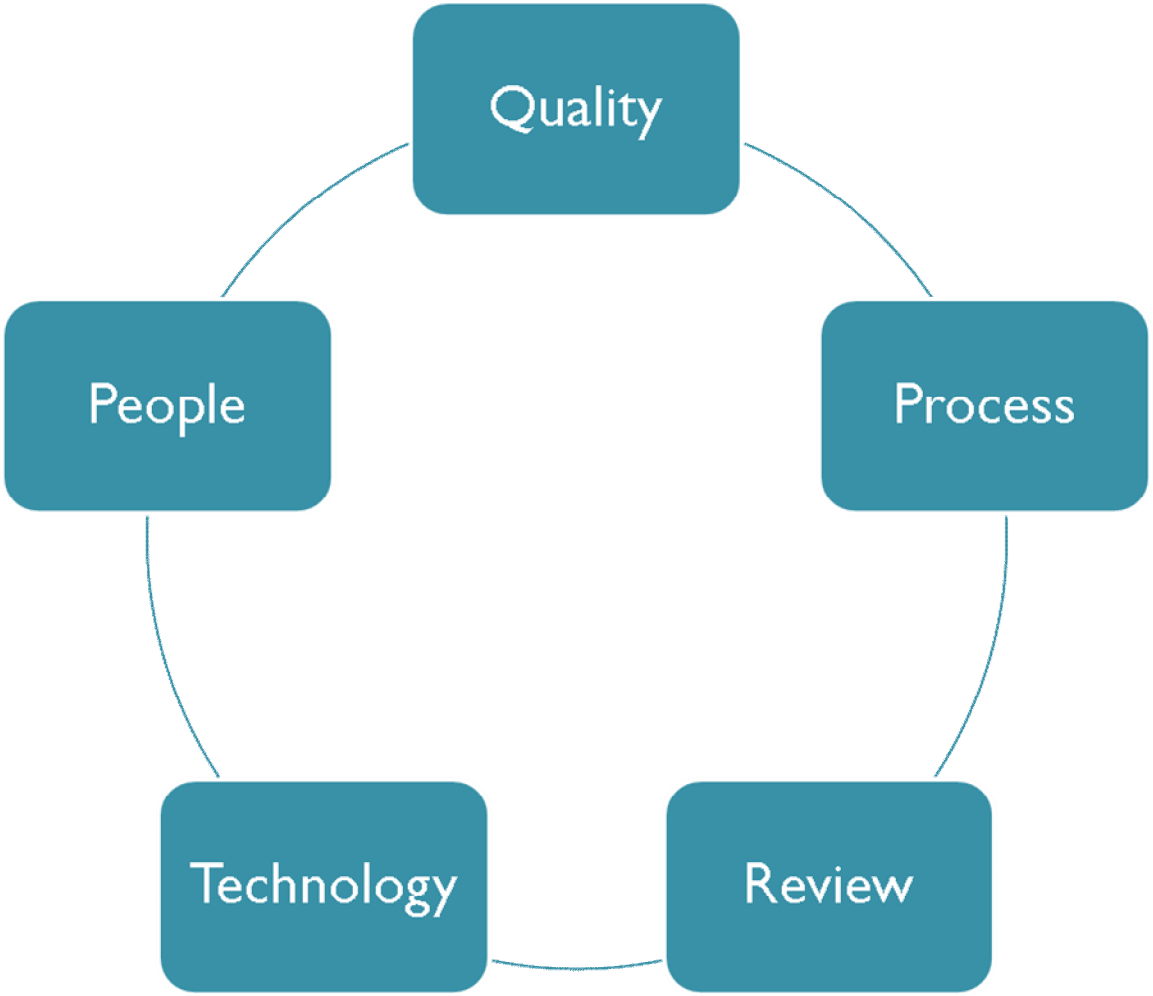
- No - Technology is important but not sufficient
- Leadership must vision direction of change and respond to it
- Nobody likes to be monitored
- People will resist change
- Technology or software alone cannot drive change
- There must be change agents
- Leadership and vision does not rest in IT but the business
- The business is you the leaders of the practice
- Your vision must be clear and you must develop implementation strategies which must be followed through

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Can you avoid knowledge? You cannot! Can you avoid technology? You cannot! Things are going to go ahead in spite of ethics, in spite of your personal beliefs, in spite of everything.

Jose M.R. Delgado, *Scientific American*, October 2005

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



POST SCRIPT

Quality assurance will be one of the most important factors in law firm business strategy in the decade of the 2010s. It will have profound effects on law firm profitability by reducing the causes of poor productivity. Law firms that do quality assurance well will also have a powerful competitive advantage over those for whom "quality assurance" is little more than crisis-to-crisis improvisation in response to client complaints

Norman Clark

QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU