



Quality Improvement Trends in Companies Using the TL 9000 Quality Management System

A Study Using TL 9000 Measurements to Examine the Customer Experience

The communications technologies industry is expanding at a very rapid rate while also adapting to emerging technologies and globalizing to become the backbone of the technology revolution. With some of the world's largest and most innovative companies in direct competition to provide high-speed connections through telephone lines, cable connections, wireless, or satellite connections, the quality and reliability of these networks and the supply lines to build and support them is a strategic differentiator. Customers look to their service providers to fulfill the promises of new technologies, which in turn, challenges the supply chain to continually improve the performance of both the products supplied and the services rendered. QuEST Forum, an industry association comprised of collaborating service providers and suppliers, is addressing this

challenge with their development, deployment, and continual improvement of the TL 9000 Quality Management System (QMS).

TL 9000, by dramatically expanding on ISO 9001, establishes a model that supports improving performance, better overall product quality, reduced cycle time, and improved customer satisfaction. One of TL 9000's major advantages over other quality management systems is the industry standardized measurement reporting requirements for hardware, software, and service quality. Certified organizations anonymously submit performance results monthly into a secure repository and summary reports are compiled by product category. The reporting organizations then use the resulting data as a benchmarking tool to track their performance and drive improvement.

Improved Quality and Performance

With the TL 9000 QMS now in its second decade, the overriding question is: Are TL 9000 certified companies demonstrating improved quality and performance? In order to objectively assess the performance of companies certified to the TL 9000 QMS, the QuEST Forum Performance Data Reports (PDR) Team is producing a series of industry papers analyzing the TL 9000 third party audited data. The first paper, released in October 2009, detailed the dramatic improvements shown in the On-Time Delivery (OTD) of products and services by companies certified to TL 9000 during a two year period from 2007 to 2008.

This paper, the second in the series, focuses on the customer experience. The team chose two measurement groupings for the basis of this study - Number of Problem Reports (NPR) and Fix Response Time (FRT). For NPR, the study examines critical and major problem reports since they have the most impact on customers. A Critical Problem Report is where *conditions severely affect the primary functionality of the product and because of the business impact to the customer requires non-stop immediate corrective action, regardless of*

the time-of-day or the day-of-week. A Major Problem Report is where the product is usable, but a condition exists that seriously degrades the product operation, maintenance or administration, etc. and requires attention during pre-defined standard hours to resolve the situation. FRT measures the organization's overall responsiveness to reported problems. Specifically, it measures the supplier's performance in resolving problem reports within predetermined intervals.

While TL 9000 has an ever growing listing of product categories, the team chose to study the Switching product family since it represents the core fabric in the interconnection of communication channels and its performance is a major factor in the customer's perception of quality and stability. The study also drills down into six product categories that represent both current and emerging technology products.

This report utilized the sustained performance data from TL 9000, including Best-In-Class (BIC) trends, Industry Average (IA) trends, and Worst-In-Class (WIC) trends. The study covered a two year period from 2008 to 2009.

