



Do You Know?

15 December 2017

Did you know that quality is not negotiable?

"It is quality rather than quantity that matters."
Seneca

"Details matter. It's worth waiting to get it right."
Steve Jobs

I suspect that all of you would agree that when doctors perform a quadruple bypass procedure, quality is not negotiable.

If you were having this procedure, I'm certain you would want your doctor to perform the procedure with 100% accuracy and completeness. You'd want him to pay attention to every detail and ensure that every task and sub-task is completed, completed in the proper sequence, and is completed according to the required standards. No shortcuts. No skipped steps. Nothing left behind inside your body that doesn't belong there. Would you demand anything less?

When we conduct an exam session one of the requirements is that the paperwork must be 100% complete and 100% accurate. That is the measure of the quality we must achieve. Should we demand anything less? Should we accept anything less?

When we fail to complete a task, fail to complete a series of tasks within a specific sequence, or fail to complete a task to its required standard, it is probably due to either **ignorance** (we don't know enough) or **ineptitude** (we don't make proper use of what we know).

How do we achieve the required standard of quality?

- **Training** resolves the issue of ignorance. Training someone to perform a task, requires that the trainee understand what is to be done, when it is to be done, how it is to be done, and the required standard for task completion.
- **Task repetition** partially resolves the issue of ineptitude. Task repetition is a great means of reinforcing what was learned. You learn from your mistakes and quickly learn how to perform/complete the task completely and accurately to the required standard. However, if the task is not regularly repeated then proficiency will be difficult to attain. Conducting three exam sessions a year, for example, does not lend itself to task repetition.

- **Paying attention to the details of the task** (e.g., The who, what, when, how, etc.) will almost certainly ensure the successful completion of the task to the required standard of completion.
- However, if a task is complex or the person performing the task hasn't had a lot experience performing the task, **nothing improves attention to detail like a checklist**. Adding a checklist is one of the best ways to reliably improve the quality of your work.

Creating a checklist is pretty simple.

Step 1 - Identify the "stupid mistakes" that cause failure. Understanding the causes of failure is the first step in creating a helpful checklist.

Step 2 - Seek input from your Regional Coordinator or reach out to your fellow team leaders for input or ideas. Ask these people for their ideas on the common causes of failure or what they would suggest checking.

Step 3 – Identify "must do" tasks and sub-tasks. There are simple reminders to do a specific task and/or sub-task regardless whether these tasks are considered critical or not.

Step 4 – Introduce the checklist to the users. Explain the purpose of the checklist and how to use it. Explain why a checklist is necessary.

Step 5 - Test the checklist. Don't be surprised if your initial checklist will need to be "tweaked". Simply take note of what needs to be tweaked and continue working through the process.

Step 6 – Improve and update your checklist. This is an on-going process. Solicit feedback from the users.

Checklists lead to greater efficiency and success. However, a checklist only has value if it is used.

If your goal is to achieve the highest quality of performance during your exam sessions then training, practice, attention to detail, and the use of checklists are the key to your success.

Now you know.