To gain a sharper focus on the culture of total quality management, look carefully at the contradictions in this way of running an organization.

Confronting the Paradoxes in a Total Quality Environment

KENNETH R. THOMPSON

This is the Age of Paradox, as Charles Handy reported in his book of the same title. Handy saw contemporary workers routinely faced with paradoxes at work, at home, and with society's basic values. Paradoxes are no stranger to total quality management (TQM) as well. The pursuit of total quality requires leaders and followers to think and act in ways that are very different from their prior modes of operation and, in some cases, that seem to be based on contradictory principles—a paradox.

There is clearly something to be gained—over and above the satisfaction of a mental exercise—in reflecting on and resolving a paradox. By doing so, we often gain a deeper understanding of the principles behind the apparent contradiction or a clarification of how we have allowed ourselves to become confused in our thinking and use of terms.

Consider, for example, the paradox that might be stated as “the best control comes from not controlling.” The legendary founder of Wal-Mart, Sam Walton, was a living demonstration of this contradiction. Walton was normally in his office only from Thursday through Saturday noon. Yet Wal-Mart was considered one of the more tightly managed organizations in the retail industry. Someone once asked Walton how he could possibly run Wal-Mart when he was out of the office over half the time. He responded by saying, simply, that this was the only way to run a customer-focused organization. He spent Monday through Wednesday in the field interacting directly with customers and employees and seeing what the competition was up to. The competitor's latest innovation might well be something Wal-Mart could adapt and do better. In fact, Wal-Mart stores, at the time, were built without an office for the store manager for the same reason. The manager's job was to be out with the customers and employees.

In this case, the paradox arises from our conventional sense of what it means to be “in control.” By resolving the paradox, we gain a broader understanding of what that concept can mean and a sharper focus on the culture Walton created. In the same way, understanding the paradoxes that surface in a total quality environment sharpens our focus on the elements that create a culture dedicated to quality.

THE SEVEN PARADOXES OF TOTAL QUALITY

The paradoxes that develop in a quality environment result from various sources: the company's efforts to achieve multiple goals in trying to meet customer needs and wants in
an efficient and realistic manner, broader roles for employees, and new ways of structuring tasks. Moreover, a number of principles in total quality management indeed are contradictory. Let's take a close look at seven of these apparent or real contradictions.

**PARADOX 1: Seek Diversity, but Build a Shared Vision**

The use of teams is an important aspect of any quality effort, and virtually all TQM companies form cross-functional, continuous process, and quality teams. The core values of a TQM program emphasize the importance of partnering, team focus, and participation. This is based on the premise that it is beneficial to get a diversity of opinions and perspectives in dealing with quality issues. If all team members have similar backgrounds, time spent in meetings may well be wasted—the decision might just as well be made by one individual. It is the diversity of technical backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that makes the team output more valuable than an individual decision.

At the same time, the company needs to build a culture in which people move as one entity, tightly focused on serving customers. This shared value, a cornerstone of any quality philosophy, requires that each person understand and embrace the organization's definition of quality. When broadly held, this understanding creates a focused and cohesive culture in which each member acts in ways that are consistent with the company's concept of quality.

How does a leader effectively develop this cohesiveness while at the same time encouraging diversity? Isn't diversity, by definition, the opposite of unity?

One possible response to this paradox is to consider diversity and a common philosophy as different endpoints on the same continuum. In this way of looking at things, the leader must carefully balance each element, admitting that increased diversity weakens the organization's ability to build a shared vision. Conversely, solidifying the organization's shared vision can only be accomplished through compromising the degree of diversity. This can be done, for example, through policies that encourage conformity or by selective hiring. Some organizations hire recent college graduates from a select list of a few universities, building a population of employees with few differences in training and approaches to business problems.

There is, however, an alternative view: namely, to consider diversity and common vision as two different constructs, not endpoints on the same continuum. Hence, an organization can have diversity and a shared vision. Diversity in views and experiences in no way obviates development of a common philosophy, such as a high degree of concern for the customer or the importance of quality to the company's success.

**Managing Paradox 1: Seeing diversity and a common vision as two different constructs provides the key to reconciling this first paradox. Clearly, there is no room for heretics when it comes to belief in the goals of the organization, its mission, and the central importance of its customers. These beliefs are essential for uniform action. But neither should there be dissenters to the creed affirming the value of diverse views in analyzing problems and potential solutions. This diversity is vital to the company's long-term health.**

Hence, the organization needs clear and accepted views about the individual's role and his or her acceptance of the organization's values. This is regardless of the degree of diversity of its members.

What are the implications for leaders? The search should be for those employees who can share the vision, yet also use insights from their diverse backgrounds for the common good. There must be a shared understanding of the importance of a full search for solutions, based on the principle that diversity will encourage the development of better analyses and solutions.

There may be differences in how to tackle problems and in framing the ideal solution. However, there also needs to be agreement that once the decision has been made, it is accepted by the group. The shared vision becomes just as important to the orga-
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Organization as the diverse viewpoints that are part of the team.

PARADOX 2: Encourage Creativity, but Be Consistent in Everything

Promoting creative ideas is important in a total quality environment. By encouraging everyone with a stake in the company (employees, suppliers, and customers) to provide input to changes in processes, product, or service designs, and to suggest ideas for new products or services, the organization successfully extends its creative powers. (For example, Motorola’s summer camp for middle school students, held at its corporate headquarters in Schaumburg, Illinois, expands the range of sources even further. Students in all sessions are asked to think of ways to improve a designated product.)

At the same time, however, customers expect consistency in the products and services they receive. Recall that one definition of quality, used in manufacturing processes, emphasizes “reduction of variation”—i.e., quality is a consequence of keeping processes within control limits. This principle extends to non-manufacturing tasks and service operations. Under total quality, leaders “manage by fact”; there are performance metrics for each task. A stock clerk’s job is to replenish inventories. An accounts payable clerk has the task of entering invoices on the computer. These tasks require dependable and consistent role performance, as evaluated by the company’s specifications for the activities. No room for “out of the box” thinking here.

Is this a paradox or not? On the surface it would seem that it is. However, if one considers that each job is really composed of two dimensions, the paradox becomes manageable. One dimension is the operational component, the normal activities associated with the individual’s task. The second dimension relates to generating ideas to improve the organization, including the employee’s own job. Much of the team formation that occurs under TQM is associated with problem solving and continuous process improvement, i.e., ways to meet the standards more efficiently,
or ways to meet higher standards. This dimension requires highly creative and innovative ideas.

Managing Paradox 2: Once the leader and followers realize that there are two distinct dimensions to each task, the paradox is manageable. Conforming to standards must be reinforced in the operational dimension, creativity and sharing new ideas in the second dimension. A failure to reinforce creativity will reduce the capacity to be creative when the need arises. But if creativity is encouraged and reinforced at the expense of operational behavior, attention may shift away from a focus on the customers’ immediate needs. And, if no one is focusing on today’s customers, there may not be a need to look at the future.

How can focused creativity be encouraged? This part of the paradox is not easy to manage. New products cannot be created without some thought as to how the organization wants to position itself in the future. However, the rejection of a new idea may shut down creativity and lead to expensive lost opportunities.

Motorola’s process for supporting creativity provides one good model. The concept of using low-orbiting satellites as a means for wireless communication was conceived by a team of engineers at an informal lunch. Now called the Iridium Project, it has the potential to radically change cellular technology. As with other new concepts, the idea went to an executive team, which evaluated the proposal and approved resources for further development. The same committee advances resources in stages so the project can be monitored and reevaluated as it progresses. At any time, the committee might withdraw support by choosing not to grant additional resources.

In this way, Motorola encourages and supports an idea through its formative stages, until the company has a better view of its potential. If a project is rejected at any of these steps, the committee explains why and acknowledges the work that went into the effort.

Motorola’s personnel practices, such as its tenure policies, also support innovation. One reason the company grants tenure after 10 years of employment (i.e., the CEO must approve any tenured employee’s layoff or dismissal) is to encourage new ideas without the fear of failure or job loss. If a tenured employee’s job is lost to reengineering, Motorola has a commitment to re-train the individual for a new job within the company.

Motorola also promotes the principle that an associate should expect to change jobs: not just promotions from one level to the next, but changes from, say, accountant to operations manager or to new product development coordinator. Motorola’s leaders believe this will keep creative ideas flowing and contribute to the company’s long-term success.

PARADOX 3: Focus on Continuous Process Improvement, but Make Break-Through Change an Important Part of the Job

A continuous process-improvement mentality stresses the need to constantly consider how to make a process or product faster, cheaper, and more reliable. The organization should be focused toward continuous improvement in everything it does. At the same time, break-through change (also called frame-breaking change) keeps the company ahead of the competition. Break-through change is a matter of revolution, not evolution. The goal is to totally reinvent what the organization is doing or providing the customer.

A leader might believe that if there is continuous process improvement, there will be little need for break-through changes. All that the organization need do is make incremental changes as the customer wants them, thus keeping itself tuned to customer needs. However, this attitude does little to open up new ways of thinking. Incremental changes lead to minor improvements, not to an ability to "leapfrog" the competition by providing a totally new product, technology application, or way of doing things. But how does one facilitate break-through changes in a continuous improvement environment?

Motorola again provides a good example. In the company’s first improvement plan, managers focused on rather modest increases in quality. And they reached them. However,
what troubled the executive committee was how the associates reached the targets. They simply worked harder and longer—a mentality that would easily hit its limits. The committee’s second set of quality goals doubled the quality target. Associates complained, arguing that there was no way they could reach those goals, given their current way of doing things. And that was the point. Motorola’s executive committee wanted their employees to re-think how the jobs were being done.

The paradox in this case is really not a paradox. Both break-through and incremental change are important, and the continuous process-improvement philosophy must be an avenue for both. The danger is that continuous process improvement will become synonymous with incremental change only. It isn’t. But the reward structure at Motorola seemed to encourage associates to behave in ways that focused on incremental changes through “tweaking the system.” While that is important and necessary, there is still a need to re-think the entire system to determine what parts can be done better and what parts may be redundant.

**Managing Paradox 3:** Leaders must provide the culture to support both break-through and continuous process improvements. This can be done only through deliberate steps to balance both types of change. Without this balance, there is a risk that thinking will be so focused on incremental changes that it will preclude the “outside of the box” thinking needed for break-through changes.

As the Motorola experience demonstrates, stretch goals can force associates to consider new ways of doing things. CSX railroad provides another case in point. The company wanted to boost car utilization for handling coal in Appalachia. Railroads are capital-intensive businesses, and the revenues from coal hauling were simply not supporting CSX’s investment in equipment. The stretch goal stated that each car must at least earn its cost of capital.

Conventional wisdom argued for reducing direct costs of labor and fuel by running longer trains. The team that accepted the stretch target realized that this approach disregarded the investment made in cars. They came up with exactly the opposite recommendation: Rather than run long trains that required hours waiting for loading and unloading because of congestion at each endpoint, it would be better to run shorter trains so that the expensive equipment could be turned around faster, thereby increasing utilization.

Currently, CSX hauls slightly less coal than it did a few years ago, but uses 5,000 fewer cars—a significant saving. The business is now profitable enough for CSX to reinvest in plant and equipment upgrades, a step toward becoming still more competitive. Had the stretch target not been hit, CSX would have had little choice but to exit from the Appalachian segment of its business.

Incremental changes must be supported as well. A suggestion system, as used in a Scanlon Plan (or one of its many variations), provides one example of how this can be done. If a suggestion is implemented and results in a cost saving, the gain is shared with the person or team making the suggestion. Dollar “rewards” are determined by a joint committee of employees and managers.

**PARADOX 4: Use Autonomous Work Groups to Enhance Performance, but Ensure Careful and Uniform Control of Product and Service Quality**

Various studies have shown that work groups having control over how things are done are more productive than groups with little control. With greater control, employees feel a stronger sense of ownership in the finished product. They are also more likely to find creative solutions to meet performance goals and to show greater commitment to the goals. This is another reason that autonomy, participation, and use of teams are at the core of any total quality approach.

Again, however, a total quality environment demands a high degree of reliability and consistency in performance, raising the need for enhanced control and monitoring.
The importance of consistency across dimensions (how customers are treated, for example) virtually forces an insistence on a set of standard behaviors by all employees.

In keeping with the “management by fact” principle in a total quality environment, companies generally develop performance standards for each task and implement periodic assessments to compare performance to standard. McDonald’s, for example, uses precise operating standards for cooking times and for the amount of ketchup, pickles, and other condiment applications. McDonald’s goal is to ensure that each outlet will provide the customer with the same quality product, regardless of whether it is in Des Moines, Iowa, or Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Many banks, similarly, use audio tapes to monitor the quality of their tellers’ interactions with customers.

Resolving Paradox 4: The paradox is real—the concepts of “control” and “autonomy” are clearly in opposition to each other. Yet both autonomy and uniform performance standards are critically important.

Reconciling this paradox takes a high degree of leadership skill. The leader must focus on finding key indicators of performance that still provide reliability and consistency, while allowing employees discretion in how they reach their performance goals.

For example, a goal such as “cut marketing expenses by $10,000” provides much less autonomy to a team than “increase net income by $10,000.” In the former case, there is very little discretion left to the employees. In the second case, the goal might be reached by increasing revenue (which might even increase marketing costs) or by reducing costs in a whole host of other ways. Increased revenues might come from increasing prices or even, perhaps, lowering prices, thereby increasing demand. In decreasing costs, efforts might focus on reducing services, reducing the cost of providing the service, or (by increasing demand) reducing unit product or service cost by spreading fixed costs over more products or units of service sold.

However, giving employees high degrees of autonomy should not be translated to mean “minimal contact with the leader.” Research supports the idea that effective monitoring, with the leader assuming the role of a facilitator, yields several benefits. First, it gives the leader feedback on the team’s progress. If there is a problem, the leader can provide greater support. Second, the act of monitoring itself, if done by a personal visit or direct communication with the employees, underscores the importance of the team and its task. This becomes a form of recognition and is important for motivation.

For example, Sam Walton insisted that all his regional and district operational managers across the United States attend the weekly Thursday afternoon, Friday, and Saturday meetings in Bentonville, Arkansas. Sam wanted to be close to the operational teams. He also wanted to be sure that each person understood what was going on in the organization and that the buyers and executive team knew what was going on in each region.

The Walton Institute was located in northwest Arkansas for similar reasons. Sam wanted to speak directly to every store manager who came through the training program so that each person would know how important he or she was to Wal-Mart’s success. Sam would take the time to learn more about what was going on in the field from his interaction with these groups.

Paradox 5: Build a Cohesive Work Team, but Welcome Conflict When Critically Analyzing Ideas

“Team trashing” has recently become a popular pastime for some authors. A recent lead story in the business section of USA Today, for example, focuses on “Why Teams Fail.” Books such as Why Teams Don’t Work exploit the limitations and problems that often occur in teams. And given the extensive use of teams in a quality environment, there are plenty of stories to demonstrate that teams are not the great salvation for inept company performance. The truth is that, in many cases, teams do not provide the high quality decisions they promised, or they fall prey to internal arguments and power struggles.
But simply deploying teams is not the issue—rather, deploying effective teams is the central idea in making TQM work. Two dimensions seem to be important to a team’s effectiveness: cohesiveness and the ability to perform critical analysis. Much of the training for team building is directed at improving team cohesiveness, based on the rationale that cohesiveness increases if there are positive dispositions among members.

Research has demonstrated that the most productive teams are highly supportive of the organization’s goals. Thus, if team members can trust each other and if there is some sense of a common purpose that each member can support, there is a higher probability that the team will be effective.

Recall that one benefit of using teams comes from the interplay of diverse (even divergent) viewpoints. While team decision making takes time (the number of members multiplied by the time spent in meetings), the decisions will be better because divergent viewpoints are shared. Moreover, the decisions made will have higher levels of acceptance by the team members because the members were part of the decision process.

However, if the teams are too cohesive, the value of group decision making decreases. Hence, simply having a cohesive group is insufficient. An effective group must be one that will share divergent viewpoints and critically challenge the ideas of individual members—without producing destructive conflict and a loss in cohesiveness.

Managing Paradox 5: As with our first paradox, this paradox is difficult to resolve if we consider cohesiveness and conflict as two ends of a continuum, i.e., if a team is too cohesive, it will not have the ability to critically analyze issues. Critical analysis leads to conflict and hurt feelings.

In reality, cohesiveness and conflict (like unity and diversity) are two different concepts. Cohesiveness is important to build the team’s ability to work for a common goal. However, a cohesive team will not be an effective team if the members focus on maintaining their cohesiveness at the expense of critical analysis. Many times teams do not want to face conflict because they do not recognize that conflict is an essential part of good decision making. The ability to deal with conflict is one reason for the group’s existence.

Conflict is positive if it is built on a foundation of mutual respect and focused on the issues, not on personalities. Hence, conflict management becomes a second important training dimension in team building. Conflict comes in two forms, C-type and A-type. C-type (cognitive conflict) occurs as team members examine, compare, and reconcile differences over substantive, issues-related issues. A-type (affective conflict) focuses on personalized, individual-related issues. A-type conflict is harmful and tends to reduce the group’s ability to work in the future because personalities, not ideas, come under attack.

C-type conflict tends to lead to better decisions, a stronger sense of accomplishment in the group, higher future cohesion, and better understanding and empathy within the team. Hence, the issue becomes, “How can I build a cohesive group that supports positive conflict?”

Higher quality output will occur if there is a focus on the team’s output and process. Requiring that the group provide a clear and fact-based rationale for its decision and the documentation that led to the decision will improve the team’s focus on C-type conflict. Allowing for divergent viewpoints in the final report is important. Motorola allows minority reports in most of its team’s decisions. In fact, the company encourages these reports, as they often provide insight into unconventional ways of doing things.

In addition, the team ought to review its processes as it proceeds on a project. It should be asking itself periodically, “Has the group been critical? How can we improve the process in the future?” Many well-established quality teams spend time with just this kind of review. For example, teams of examiners for the State of Illinois Quality Award conclude each section analysis with an assessment of “how things are done” not just “what is done.” It helps to clear the air in
cases where strong emotions were shared. Finally, the process review leads to a plan for future group interactions, which provides a means to rebuild any lost cohesiveness.

PARADOX 6: Set Realistic, yet Challenging Goals for Maximum Performance, but Use Stretch Targets to Dramatically Improve Performance

Considerable research over the past 50 years supports a curvilinear relationship between performance and goal setting. To summarize:

- Setting goals leads to higher levels of performance than not setting goals.
- Specific goals are more likely to improve performance than general goals. (Examples of general goals include, “Do your best” or “Do the best you can.” Examples of specific goals include, “Do 50 units by quitting time” or “The job should be done in 8 hours.”)
- More difficult objectives are more likely to lead to higher levels of performance than easier objectives, up to the point where employees see the objectives as unrealistic.

But if this last principle applies unilaterally, why didn’t the employees at Motorola and CSX abandon their efforts in the face of seemingly impossible-to-reach goals? To explain this phenomenon, we need to take a deeper look at the research.

The link between goal level and performance is closely related to an employee’s acceptance of the goal, and much of the research on goal setting, such as that conducted by Edwin Locke, has focused on acceptance as an important threshold for the goal to have any behavioral effort. Locke’s work also found that a goal would be accepted if the individual viewed it as reasonable and reachable, and that the person assigning the goal had authority to do so. Setting goals at too low a level led to suboptimal performance. In cases where the goal was perceived as too difficult, the employee would opt for his or her own goal level and performance would decrease.

In explaining why stretch goals seem to defy this logic, we need to consider how the environment affects the all-important concept of goal acceptance. There seem to be four dimensions that affect an individual’s acceptance of stretch goals.

The first two relate to the traditional concept of empowerment, which encompasses both autonomy and control over how a task is done. Higher levels of autonomy appear to increase the probability that the team will accept a stretch goal, and the team’s control over how work is done appears to increase the likelihood that the team will achieve the stretch target.

Two other dimensions, bureaucratic immunity and systemic accommodation, serve to enhance control and autonomy. Bureaucratic immunity can be defined as freedom to avoid the lengthy review processes necessary in most change approaches. A successful “stretch team” often gets full control over the change process with minimal interference from other parts of the organization. Often, just knowing that “our orders are from the top” is all that the team needs to get things done. With top management support, it is implicit and sometimes very explicit that those who try to put roadblocks in the way do so at their own peril.

The last dimension, systemic accommodation, relates to the organization’s ability to accommodate the team with access to the information it needs, in the form it needs, when it needs it. With any change effort, there is a need to see things differently, and that requires full access to information. The team also needs to obtain information about the progress of the change effort (baseline and post-intervention data) to measure its success.

Managing Paradox 6: The organizational leader must handle the sixth paradox on two levels. Challenging but realistic goals are helpful for normal operational performance and continuous process improvement. Stretch goals, on the other hand, are very helpful in creating the kind of culture that will foster break-through changes.

3M provides a case in point. The company’s growth is predicated on a stream of new products regularly introduced into the market. In the years prior to 1991, the goal
stipulated that 25 percent of 3M’s revenues would come from products introduced within the past five years. But in 1992, sales increased only 1 percent. 3M’s leadership responded by stretching the goal: 30 percent of sales were to come from products introduced in the past four years. This led to a refocusing of research and development efforts, and 3M reached the target.

PARADOX 7: Reward Team Effort, but Create a High Performance Climate for Individuals

Another important reason for using teams is to get employees involved in more than their individual tasks and thus more focused on the goals of the organization. For this reason, teams sometimes draw their members from diverse functions, or from both within the organization and from outside. This broader perspective serves as an antidote to an “I just do my job” mentality.

In addition, rewarding team effort will do much to focus individual effort toward common goals. But the use of team rewards raises a number of troublesome questions. Won’t team rewards diffuse the importance of individual effort? Won’t team rewards lead some members to become “social loafers,” i.e., people who let the group do the lion’s share of the work? How can the organization recognize superior individual performance if there is diffused accountability, as occurs in rewarding group performance? Will the organization lose good people who get frustrated because they feel that their efforts are not recognized individually?

Managing Paradox 7: This paradox is real. The organization needs high levels of performance and involvement from each employee with respect to both the individual’s basic task (focus on quality and customer responsiveness) and to his or her distinctive creativity in providing ideas for quality improvements. But it also needs teams that are more than simply a collection of individuals. In addition, team cooperation helps move employees from thinking of the organization in terms of their narrow responsibilities to considering the customer as the focus of the organization’s existence and, hence, their job’s existence. The leader’s job in managing this paradox is to balance both dimensions carefully—without losing sight of either individual motivation or collaborative efforts.

Assessing individual performance is not the main problem here, nor is assessing team performance. The focus of attention in managing this paradox is on assessing how well an individual works within the group (process evaluation). The twin dangers here are “social loafers” (the possible result of a reward structure too focused on group output) and “heroes,” individual who want to stand apart from the team as star performers (a consequence of a reward structure too focused on individual output). Hence, the leader needs to focus on an individual’s contribution to the team process as one component of that person’s performance evaluation.

In fact, three elements need to be considered in establishing the individual’s performance evaluation: his or her specific job performance, the productivity of the team of which the individual is part, and how well that individual contributed to the team’s collaborative efforts (process assessment).

Process assessment is a bit tricky. Some leaders advocate that there be some peer review by the team. This can be done anonymously, using some type of questionnaire, or publicly, with the team reflecting on its own processes and discussing each member’s contribution. Some leaders would advocate a forced distribution over several dimensions of performance evaluation with a global rating as a culmination of the process.

One Midwest engineering company has each team member sign evaluations of each and all team members (including a self-evaluation) over five dimensions of team performance: conflict resolution, fostering a creative environment, dependable performance, quality of performance, and keeping the team activity focused. These evaluations are then shared with all the members of the team. The evaluations are signed because the company wants to develop leaders who are willing to face potentially difficult issues. If
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an employee is willing to be critical behind an employee’s back, the employee should be willing to face the individual and raise these concerns as well.

The team, together, creates a single evaluation with a requirement to report at least three strengths and weaknesses for each member. Minority opinions are allowed. Both the composite and the individual evaluations are then included in the feedback that is used in the individual employee’s performance evaluation.

By using this system, the firm hopes to improve the diagnostic aspects of the review. The open sharing of evaluations should increase each person’s self-awareness of how he or she contributes to the team as well as awareness of how others contribute. And that understanding should be more complete than would have been possible with a written evaluation. In addition, the organization hopes the interaction will enhance leadership skills.

**BRINGING PURPOSE TO THE PARADOXES**

Bob Galvin, in his book *The Ideas of Ideas*, speaks of the importance of finding a “purposeful difference.” He argues that it is important for an organization to search out paths that are different from those that other organizations are following. In fact, if the competitors are all following one path, then it may be time to consider “the path less traveled.” That path, Galvin believed, could lead to unique ways of serving the customer. This, in turn, might provide a sustainable competitive advantage important for the long-term success of, in this case, Motorola.

In similar fashion, there are purposeful reasons for paradoxes. By recognizing and resolving the paradoxes, leaders gain a sharper focus on the dynamics of a total quality environment. The seven paradoxes presented here can be grouped around three
focal points. Each is essential. If one is missing, the quality focus will blur. Exhibit 1 demonstrates these relationships.

The first three paradoxes relate to creating the culture of the work environment. By seeking diversity, building a shared vision, encouraging creativity, maintaining a consistent focus, encouraging break-through and continuous process improvement, the organization creates a culture in which quality is the central concern. By a judicious handling of each of these first three paradoxes, the organizational leader will find that the culture is more conducive to the type of continual change, customer responsiveness, and idea generation necessary to sustain a competitive advantage.

A second focal point centers on building a responsive team environment. The use of self-directed work teams and other aspects of instilling greater autonomy is an important first step. Close monitoring of performance, if done in a supportive way that demonstrates the importance of the team’s activities, will improve the team’s self-concept. Building a cohesive team that can critically analyze ideas is essential to its effectiveness. Specific targets help focus the team’s efforts. Stretch goals lead to dramatic results if the team has the necessary environment to support its efforts.

The third focal point relates to creating and maintaining an environment that supports performance. This is done by reinforcing team productivity, individual productiv-
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