



feature (vertical axis) and how they saw its current performance (horizontal axis). They then talked about their reasoning and provided examples to support their conclusions.

On completion of the interviews there was a clear understanding of what was important to the customers of GPM, and where they saw the need for improvement. This provided an excellent basis for establishing the need for reconsidering objectives and strategies in the minds of the project managers, and also for determining the actual objectives for the left-hand side of the QFD (see the diagram on the right).

**Determining the objectives**

As might be expected, the choice of 'features' for the interview cards largely determined the final objectives for the QFD - but in practice, the 'features' were carefully thought through beforehand, and both the interviewees and the project managers were given opportunities to challenge them, to refine them and to take ownership for them.

The process used to build ownership for the objectives within GPM was as follows: The project managers were asked to mark up on flipcharts what they liked and disliked about each feature (draft objective) and how it was worded, and then to prioritise the dislikes, and propose changes which would be discussed and approved or rejected by consensus. Many items were felt by the group to be important to resolve, but in the end only one word was changed on one objective. The process of reconsidering the features, and the freedom to choose them as objectives, or not, is a crucial element in building understanding and ownership in the finally agreed objectives. However, people tend to need to see that they are being productive and in hindsight we hadn't realised how good our draft set of objectives was. As a result there was a concern that the process appeared somewhat unproductive (increasing ownership and understanding is not always that easy to observe in ourselves). Were we to repeat the exercise, we would probably use an intentionally flawed set of objectives as the start-point, purely to overcome this issue.

**Identifying the processes of delivery**

Unlike many organisations, GPM is largely homogeneous - one person's responsibilities and approach is much like another's. In this way, whatever the processes of project management are, it would be inappropriate for people to specialise in any one of them - all project managers are likely to use all processes at various times. However, if such processes need to be improved, it does make sense to divide the improvement effort up amongst the group, even though everybody will then benefit from the more efficient and effective approaches.

To this end, a model of the processes of project management was devised by the head of GPM and tested with her project managers, who accepted the draft model and set to work on better defining what each process included. At the QFD workshop, they brought

their outputs in the form of sets of sticky-notes, and set about refining the model collectively by resolving any duplications or gaps between the processes, and by agreeing the process boundaries.

Before building the QFD itself, the project managers built a large flipchart grid of the processes against the

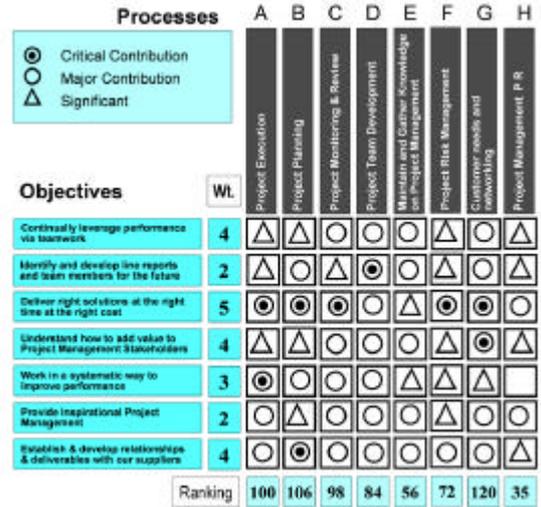


Fig. 2 GPM's QFD diagram

objectives, and used the interview feedback to identify key issues that needed to be addressed. These issues they wrote out on sticky-notes and placed them in the grid at the most relevant intersection of process and objective. This exercise gave a practical demonstration of what they were trying to achieve through the QFD process, and provided a good basis for stimulating the discussions necessary to create the grid\* of the QFD.

**Delivering the objectives**

Following the development of the grid, responsibility for managing the processes was allotted to different project managers, and their responsibilities for developing them made clear. This responsibility was grasped enthusiastically; everybody could now see the potential for these processes to ensure the success of the group, and as a result they felt more in control of their destiny and were keen to address some of the issues they now recognised.

Understandably, they were very good at planning out their responsibilities into a clear milestone plan. But further to this, their manager is unusually talented at balancing a supportive, inspiring and empowering approach with the hard messages that are sometimes needed to make progress. She has the courage to be both sympathetic and direct at the same time and as a result her team's progress has been exemplary.

The grid of sticky-notes of the key issues from the interviews was transferred to their office, and has become an effective basis for monitoring and encouraging their

The grid of the QFD is the central area of the QFD diagram where the potential contribution of each process to achieving each objective is explored and mapped out. (See Fig. 2)

progress. When an issue has been addressed by a planned process improvement it is taken off the issues grid, and when the group become aware of new issues, these are added back on to the issues grid (see the picture below).



Fig. 3 The issues grid now in position on the wall of the project management office

As a result of their work, all projects are currently on target, and recent feedback reflects that GPM has built up the respect and admiration of the company, to the extent that people are beginning to sit in awe of their achievements - an excellent position for a group whose success is largely determined by their ability to influence others.

**Accommodating new insights**

As work progressed on the QFD, the project managers gained new insights that have changed their perceptions on a number of relationships and values within their QFD. This was an inevitable consequence of the work they had been doing to systematically improve their processes, but in most cases the insights merely added to their opportunities, and any reconciliation with the QFD diagram itself could wait until the next planning round.

It is important to maintain sufficient stability within the QFD that projects initiated to improve performance are not undermined by uncertainty about what they are trying to do. However, some insights may reflect an original perception so flawed that to leave it unaddressed would be very likely to lead to confusion and wasted effort. Such issues can be addressed by means of a Spring Clean workshop\*.

In preparation for the Spring Clean workshop, the project manager's were surveyed to identify which elements of the QFD diagram needed changing in order to ensure efficient progress. Only items flagged up before the workshop were addressed so as to avoid opening the floodgates within the workshop and end up changing

A Spring Clean workshop is intended specifically to address the learning that arises in the early months of adopting a new QFD. Typically, it has two main components - the first concerns necessary adjustments to the QFD diagram itself, and the second concerns adjustments to the way it is being implemented in practice.

everything. The proposed changes concerned one measure, three cells, and the combination of three existing processes into one new one. The map of the proposed changes can be seen below.

	PL	PH	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	Target	Measure
G1	W1	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	M1
G2	W2	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2	M2
G3	W3	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3	F3	G3	H3	M3
G4	W4	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4	F4	G4	H4	M4
G5	W5	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5	F5	G5	H5	M5
G6	W6	A6	B6	C6	D6	E6	F6	G6	H6	M6
G7	W7	A7	B7	C7	D7	E7	F7	G7	H7	M7

Fig. 5 Map of proposed changes to the GPM QFD as proposed to the Spring Clean workshop

**Managing the culture**

The Spring Clean workshop also provided an opportunity to begin work on the culture of GPM. Although progress to this point had been good, the head of GPM was concerned that more could be done to establish ownership within the group for systematically driving up performance. This was addressed in two ways.

Firstly, the group undertook a survey of how they had progressed against their original implementation plan. The results are shown in the diagram below. The group reflected on this picture by considering what had led to the result, in terms of what factors had supported progress with their implementation to date, and what factors had been a barrier to progress. These factors were considered in more depth, and then prioritised and assigned as actions for the group to work on, both collectively and individually.



Fig. 6 Results of survey into progress on implementing the conclusions of the QFD and the supporting systematic processes

Secondly, the group used a maturity model to self-assess their adoption of the systematic practices needed to fulfil their aspirations in QFD (see diagram on the right). They used this to evaluate their current level of adoption, and also the level that they felt they needed to ensure that their rate of progress was sustained over the year. They then considered what actions they each needed to take personally in how they conducted their work to close the gap that they had identified.

Both exercises worked well, and GPM are working hard to build on their earlier success and ensure their effectiveness in delivering the projects on time.

The Spring Clean workshop finished with some champagne to celebrate the successes that had been achieved to date.

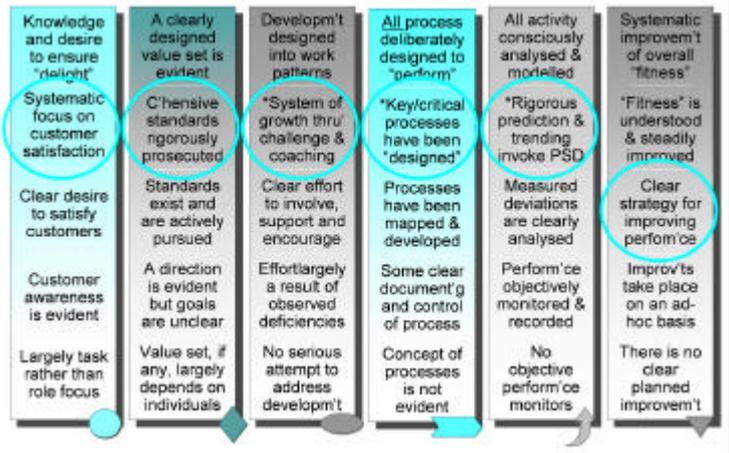


Fig. 6 A maturity model for the adoption of systematic management practice. Each column reflects a separate aspect of systematic management. Cells within the column reflect increasing levels of proficiency. The circles represent GPM's targets for the adoption of management practice as agreed at the Spring Clean workshop

QFD is the only tool I have seen that allows a manager implement cultural, structural, and process changes in to an organisation whilst still being able to keep an overview. It allows me to monitor progress on all aspects of change and focus my attention appropriately, safe in the knowledge that I understand why I need to focus attention in that area, and sure that it will give me a sustainable change in the performance of my department. As a consequence of QFD, and the resulting clarity of the goals, aims and vision, the whole department is more focused, but also having more fun despite the difficulty of their task.

Clare Healy, Programme Manager, Wound Management Business Unit, Smith & Nephew plc

To learn more about systematic approaches to management visit [www.tesseract.com](http://www.tesseract.com)

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