

# Goals: They're Your Choice

Quality goals are unique to every company, but share one common thread: track your progress!

BY DAN KAUFMAN

**EVERY FABRICATOR RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF MEETING A CUSTOMER'S REQUIREMENTS.** But the *Certification Standard for Steel Buildings* takes it one step further. You need to have specific quality goals—and a documented method of measuring whether you're meeting your goals.

But what are your quality goals? They can be as simple as increasing customer satisfaction or as critical as reducing shop errors. Of course, these goals will be different for every company, as will the method of measuring them. The important part is they are relevant to your business and measurable. The *Standard* doesn't specify what the goals should be or how to measure them, so that means you can set up your own criteria and procedures.

Here are some of the goals and measurements we have seen:

GOAL	MEASUREMENT
Customer satisfaction	Survey all customers
Customer satisfaction	Survey top 10 customers
Exceed customer expectations	Number of times you help the customer unexpectedly
Exceed customer expectations	Money you save the customer
Reduce shop errors	Rework time
Reduce shop errors	Rework materials cost
Reduce customer complaints	Complaint log—number of occurrences
Reduce customer complaints	Complaint log—dollar value

You already measure errors; formalizing the procedure and keeping track of them is not difficult. You can also compare total pieces produced to the number of noted defects (if you're not doing 100% inspection, that number will be diluted, but trends will still show up). Again, every shop is different. Would you rather have a single loss of 200 hours or lose 200 pieces over a year's time? Design your measurements to reflect what's important to you and your shop. One warning: Don't change the measurement method too often or you'll lose track of where you are. If you don't like the measurement you started with, it's okay to add another measurement. Just make sure you hang onto the old one long enough to make a comparison to last year.

Remember also not to be too easy on yourself. For example, if a customer calls in and says they had a problem with a base plate, but that they'll handle it themselves, it's still a complaint—even if there was no charge-back and no written complaint. Quality is what keeps a customer coming back; that attitude can change from job-to-job or from day-to-day so it pays to carefully track the relationship.

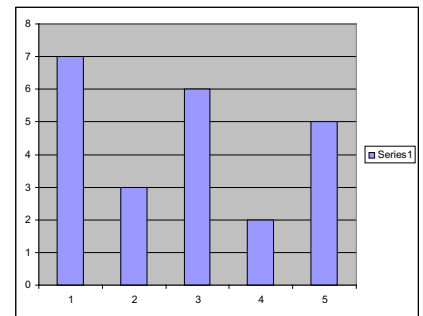
If this sounds like a lot of work, trust me, it's better than the alternative. A study done by Johnson Controls in the 1990s showed that

"satisfied" customers came back 32% of the time. But "very satisfied" customers came back 59% of the time. Did you say your goal was to meet the customer's requirements? Are you really doing enough by keeping them "satisfied"?

Once you've determined your goals and measurements, you need to determine how to present your results. What does the auditor want to see? Forget the auditor for now and concentrate on something that will work for your organization. It will work for the auditor too. Quality goals can be a powerful motivator for your team and it's important that you present the results in a way that is easily understandable. And that means forgetting about presenting a list of numbers. Instead, concentrate on a graphical presentation.

You can simply draw a chart tracking your results. Or, if you failed art class, use the handy and simple tools on your computer. Spreadsheets now make it very easy to produce charts. A trend chart should only take five minutes to produce. Any additional time people spend on them is to make them pretty (usually for the boss, so ask yourself how demanding you want to be). If you have Excel, here's how simple it is:

Open Excel, showing a blank sheet. Enter the following numbers in cells A1 to A5: 7, 3, 6, 2, 5. Click on the top cell (with the 7), don't let go of the button, and move the cursor down to the fifth cell (with the 5). You now have a box around the five numbers. Let go of the button, go up to **Insert** on the top line, and click on it. You will see **Chart** as an option; click on that. Next it shows some chart-like items, and there's a box that says **Finish**. Click that. Now you have a chart. Assuming that lower numbers are better, the chart shows that last year (year four) you were a hero, but this year's performance (year five) may not earn you a good annual review.



When you look at these indicators, you make the comparisons between the past and the present in your head, without a lot of calculating and difficulty. It really shouldn't take that long to document them. If it does take a lot to weed out the needed information on paper, it could be due to worry that somebody is going to beat you up with that number later. In that case, perhaps the number in your head isn't quite as accurate as you thought. We want to help you to ask the right questions, and then to get the right answers. **MSC**

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