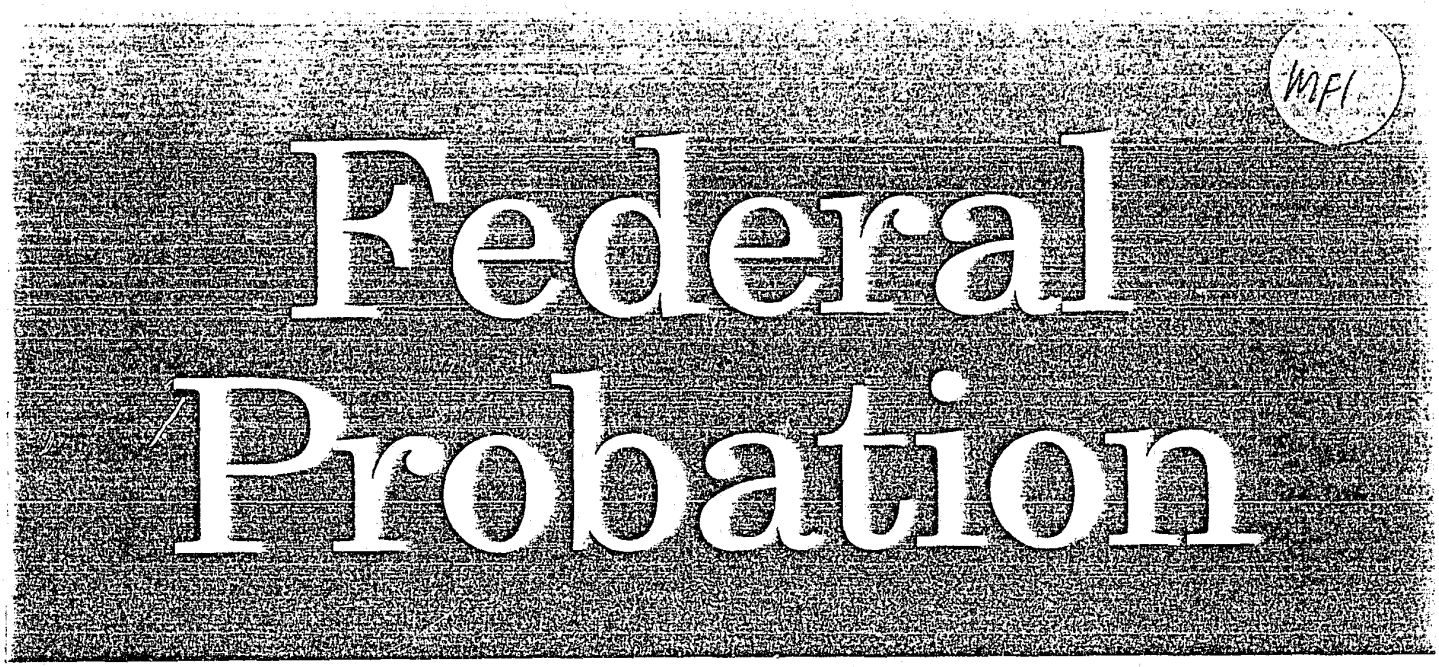

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This Issue in Brief

Choosing the Future of American Corrections: Punishment or Reform?—What does the future hold for criminal justice and corrections in this country? Authors James Byrne and Mary Brewster examine the four most important predictions of John DiIulio, Princeton University professor and author of *No Escape—The Future of American Corrections*, and offer some suggestions to those state and local corrections policymakers who believe the United States is moving in the wrong direction.

The Impact of Critical Incident Stress: Is Your Office Prepared to Respond?—Physical assault of an officer while on duty, unexpected death of a coworker, a natural disaster—all can be considered critical incidents which affect not only the individuals involved but the organization as a whole. Authors Mark Maggio and Elaine Terenzi define critical incidents, explain the importance of providing stress education before such crises occur, and offer suggestions as to what administrator and managers can do to respond effectively and maintain a healthy and productive workforce.

Probation Officer Safety and Mental Conditioning.—Author Paul W. Brown discusses mental conditioning as a component of officer safety that is all too often overlooked or minimized in training programs. He focuses on five areas of mental conditioning: the color code of awareness, crisis rehearsal, the continuum of force, kinesics, and positive self-talk.

Federal Detention: The United States Marshals Service's Management of a Challenging Program.— Focusing on the detention of Federal prisoners, author Linda S. Caudell-Feagan discusses the work of the United States Marshals Service. She explains how detention beds are acquired, how the Marshals Service administers funds to pay the costs of housing Federal detainees, what the ramifications of increased detention costs are, and what actions the Marshals Service has taken to address detention problems.

Total Quality Management: Can It Work in Federal Probation? —Author Richard W. Janes outlines the principles of total quality management and their application to Federal probation work. The article is based not only on a review of the literature but also on the author's experience in a Federal probation agency where these concepts are being implemented.

College Education in Prisons: The Inmates' Perspectives.—Author Ahmad Tootoonchi reports on a study to determine the impact of college education on the attitudes of inmates toward life and their future. The results reveal that a significant number of the inmates surveyed believe that their behavior can change for the better through college education.

Visitors to Women's Prisons in California: An Exploratory Study.—Author Lisa G. Fuller describes a study which focuses on visitors to California's three state women's prisons. The study, designed to

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Total Quality Management: Can It Work in Federal Probation?

By Richard W. Janes

Supervising United States Probation Officer, Southern District of Florida

As WE prepare to enter the 21st century, we face a challenge in the public sector to produce better quality services at less cost and with less manpower. Government is notorious for doing virtually the opposite. We build bureaucracies for their own sake, and they become fatter but less responsive to the needs of their customers. Total Quality Management (TQM) is a much heralded response to these problems, as reflected by President Clinton's plan to "reinvent government" using its methods. Setting aside discussion of that awesome task, the question here is whether principles of TQM can be successfully implemented in a Federal probation office.

The discussion that follows will set out seven general principles of TQM, with references made to their application to Federal probation work. The article will then turn to the concept of team building, which many experts argue is mandatory for a successful TQM program. There are various kinds of teams that exist in the corporate world today, but only three of the basic types will be discussed. The article will conclude with recommendations about how TQM can be implemented in a Federal probation office. This writer is participating as a middle manager in the implementation of TQM in the probation office in the Southern District of Florida. That implementation process is still in its early stages, yet the resulting experiences have been rewarding and I hope instructive as they are presented here.

Principles of TQM

Leadership

Total Quality Management will not work if the organization is not ready to commit to a total quality effort. The culture of the organization will have to change to include a climate of cooperation, not competition, among work groups. Employees must feel that their jobs are secure and that they will not be fired or demoted. There will have to be a reward system related to increased productivity and better quality service. Employees must feel that they are being treated fairly, are not being manipulated, and have a real stake in the outcome. It is the responsibility of top management to ensure that these conditions are met (Hodgetts, 1993, p. 12).

The TQM process thus begins at the top; senior-level managers have to understand what TQM is all about, how it works, and why it is useful. Time, effort, and money must be invested to include the purchase of books and materials, attendance at seminars, and so on. A study group should then be formed, to include staff members at all levels, for the purpose of surveying employees throughout the organization and otherwise determining how TQM will be accepted. This group should not be rushed, and it may take as long as 6 months to study the impact of a TQM program. If the study group concludes that TQM is a viable concept for the organization, then an implementation team should be formed with the responsibility of developing and carrying out the plan.

There are various ways to implement a TQM program, but most will involve training personnel in the tools and techniques by which to analyze problems, gather and interpret data, and take corrective action. Teams may also be created to work on projects and make decisions without constant oversight from management. To extend authority and responsibility to all employees, whether working on teams or as individuals, is a key ingredient of any TQM process (Hodgetts, 1993, p. 12).

While the impetus for the program begins with top management, its success or failure will depend upon middle management. Top managers cannot effectively implement something at the employee level without convincing middle managers of its importance. Because middle managers can be a significant roadblock to implementing TQM, it is critical for top managers to empower them just as they are expected to empower their staffs. Many companies make the mistake of creating an adversarial situation with middle managers and develop "employee participation" schemes which exclude them. This causes further alienation and destroys team cohesion (Harrington, 1987, pp. 59-66).

In the Federal Probation System, middle managers or supervisors are generally "on the front line" where the work is being done and are important resources for definitions of quality. They enforce both national and local standards of conduct and performance. As teachers and mentors, much of the responsibility for developing staff in the skills of quality management will fall upon them. They should be closely involved in the improvement of many of the work processes and must provide feedback to top management about team and individual performance.

All managers in this TQM change process must choose to see their world in a new light. To do otherwise is to fall victim to a condition called "paradigm paralysis." In Joel Barker's insightful book about paradigms, he defines paradigm as a set of rules and regulations that establishes boundaries and tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful. Paradigm paralysis is a terminal disease of certainty, a refusal to entertain new ideas about life, the work, the people and so on. Barker argues that the total quality movement is the most important paradigm shift of the 20th century. It is a change to a new game, a new set of rules, and organizations will need to adapt just to keep up (Barker, 1992).

Customer-Driven Quality

Perhaps the most important principle of TQM is customer-driven quality. Agencies must identify their customers and survey them to determine what needs must be satisfied. These needs, sometimes referred to as valid requirements, should be reasonable, measurable, and achievable (Qualtec, Inc., 1991). In addition to customer surveys, valid requirements may be established by standards or policies already in effect at the time. Others may be generated by complaints from customers, a crisis situation, or changes in the law or administrative policies. For example, Federal sentencing guidelines are amended annually and establish numerous valid requirements for probation officers who write presentence investigation reports (PSI's). U.S. circuit court opinions affect officers who write PSI's or supervise offenders. Also, Monograph 109, *Supervision of Federal Offenders*, sets forth statutory responsibilities of probation officers and supervision strategies for meeting those responsibilities.

Customer satisfaction does not, however, deal with only external customers such as judges, the Parole Commission, the U.S. Attorney's office, and others outside the probation office. A "next process customer" is a fellow employee with whom probation officers deal daily in their work processes, the one next in line to receive a product or service. A secretary who types a presentence report for a probation officer is a customer of that officer, and in turn the officer becomes the secretary' s customer once the secretary returns the typed report to the officer. In TQM there is an obligation to satisfy the next process customer, thus adding value to the product as it passes through each step of the process (Qualtec, Inc., 1991).

An effective TQM agency will become obsessed with the voice of the customer. Everyone must gauge every action against customers' needs, expectations, and wants. Managers must "invest in complaints" and recognize the value derived from resolving them (Whiteley, 1991, p. 40). It is easy to develop an "attitude" about unhappy customers who frequently complain, whether they are internal or external customers. In some cases, improving customer relations may mean nothing more than showing respect for people. A probation officer who chews gum while dictating is not only annoying to a secretary, but a hindrance to quality. Most of us can tell when we call an office if the receptionist answering the telephone has had a bad day. We also become exasperated when it takes six or eight times before the phone is answered at all. There are so many small things that an agency does or fails to do that, when taken as a whole, can have a major impact on customer satisfaction.

We need to listen to our customers and constantly ask them how we are doing. The chief probation officer should routinely make customer visits with judges and agency heads to find out what is being done right and what needs to be improved. Others throughout the office can make similar calls and inquire about ways to enhance relations and make the system more efficient. Of course, achieving better quality is a two-way street, and there is a responsibility also to communicate our concerns to customers about their actions and try to make negotiated agreements in areas of conflict.

Continuous Improvement of Work Processes

Another critical aspect of TQM is the continuous improvement of work processes. This is accomplished by identifying top priority work processes and then improving those processes by focusing on the tasks involved and who is responsible for each task. By flow-charting tasks in a process, employees can visualize what steps go into their jobs and those that might be merged, altered, or even omitted. Once the tasks are identified, indicators of quality can be established to determine how well the process is meeting customer expectations (Qualtec, Inc., 1991).

For example, assume the local rule for disclosure of presentence investigation reports (PSI's) is 30 days prior to sentencing, yet reports are not being disclosed within that timeframe. Thirty days becomes a quality indicator for that process. In order to meet that customer expectation, the tasks between plea or conviction and disclosure need to be reviewed. However, if a problem is already evident in some smaller segment of that process, then that "micro" process can be analyzed. It may be that officers are not conducting initial interviews quickly enough or reports are sitting on supervisors' desks for several days. Needless to say, there could be many reasons why PSI's are disclosed late, including the fact that officers and supervisors are accustomed to doing business that way. The late reports might simply be built into the system. In South Florida, we had an on-time disclosure rate for PSI's of less than 50 percent without even realizing it. In less

than 6 months, that rate had increased to over 80 percent with minor system changes. The key is to begin looking at processes that need to be improved and then reviewing them regularly.

Management by Fact

TQM demands that work processes be reviewed for factual information that can be used to solve the problems. Given the above situation concerning disclosure of PSI's, assume that the supervisor "believes" officers are slow in interviewing defendants. However, a review of 50 late reports reflects that 95 percent of the defendants were interviewed within 3 days of plea. The search for causes of the late reports can then shift to other work processes. Management by fact in all aspects of an agency's business will allow data analysis to replace "shooting from the hip" decisionmaking.

Of course, the business of probation officers cannot always be reduced to data analysis. It is simple enough to measure the time it takes to accomplish certain tasks but more difficult to determine the quality of those same tasks. This is especially true in supervision of offenders, where "bean counting" is no longer a measure of effective supervision. Managers must, however, become accustomed to relying on the best information available in assessing quality work.

Empowering Employees

The concept of empowering employees has become widely accepted in corporate America. TQM philosophy argues that power shared with employees who have the organization's interests at heart is the only means to achieve total quality. Managers must learn to "let go" and share information with their staffs and just as importantly be willing to accept contrary opinions about how the work is done. That does not mean to abdicate leadership responsibilities but simply to retreat from the control mentality and recognize that employees doing the work will oftentimes know best how to improve it.

It is important to understand that TQM does not advocate a process of democratic management. Those concepts were practiced in the 1960's and 1970's and were ineffective generally because it took too long to get even routine decisions made. It makes sense that "if everyone is responsible for decision-making, then no one is responsible for decision-making" (Wright, 1991). Leaders must still be leaders in a TQM environment but need to learn to trust and empower employees to gain their fullest potential.

The issue of trusting employees is tied closely to the process of personnel evaluation. This is a highly controversial subject since many TQM experts suggest eliminating the annual review or reducing it to a pass/fail system. Dr. W. Edwards Deming, perhaps the best known TQM expert and the man who taught the Japanese about quality, believes performance reviews should be eliminated. Deming feels that most people will do the best they can and that annual reviews are destructive in that they label winners and losers rather than foster teamwork. Those who cannot perform should be rotated to an assignment where they can and must be trained to ensure that their transition is successful (Aguayo, 1990).

Blame the System, Not the People

Dr. Deming argues that about 94 percent of the problems in an organization are the fault of the system and not the people. If the system is improved, then quality will improve. It is the responsibility of management to change the system by reducing the level of natural variation that plagues all processes (Gabor, 1990, p. 285). Most supervisors who routinely review work can relate to the problems of how differently the work is done by their officers. Many officers take pride in their individual styles while others submit work with a new wrinkle every time. Conversely, supervisors differ significantly in their expectations, and officers transferring from one to another can be frustrated by their unique or contradictory styles. The point is that bringing some of that "creativity" under control will lead to a far more stable system.

Dr. Deming's work is deeply rooted in science, but it is not this writer's intent to elaborate on this aspect of Deming's work. However, several of his other points should be considered. Managers who focus on fixing system defects (quality control) will rarely improve the system. The key is to build quality into the system up front and reduce or eliminate the costly process of finding and fixing defects (Aguayo, 1990). How many hours a week do supervising probation officers spend reviewing case files and presentence reports that might be reduced by better training of officers, communicating expectations, and otherwise improving the manner in which work is done? Of course, probation officers are not machines, and we cannot expect a workplace free of defects. Quality control will still be necessary, but the time given it can be significantly reduced.

When changes are made in the system, it is critically important to check constantly and see what impact those changes have made. So many managers simply plan strategies, implement them, and then repeat the process without checking the progress. In practice, many such ideas eventually die out but not before countless man-hours have been spent for nothing. Fickle managers obsessed with change for change sake are responsible for incredible waste because they have no system of damage control. Making changes in the system without the benefit of profound knowledge

can worsen or even ruin the system (Aguayo, 1990, p. 81).

Ownership and Partnership

Ownership and partnership also have become household words in corporate America with the advent of TQM. The concept of ownership relates to that of empowerment, where everyone in the organization has a stake in the outcome of product or service development. It seems natural that people who contribute in meaningful ways to the work processes will care more about the end results. While this concept seems compelling as a feature of TQM, a note of caution is needed. Ownership is a very abstract notion and should not be forced down the throats of employees with slogans and promises. It must be nurtured and developed over time, and when TQM is fully implemented, its presence will be obvious.

Partnership development relates not only to cooperative efforts within the organization but also to the encouragement of relationships with outside agencies. An ongoing effort must be made to work with customers and other agencies toward accomplishing common goals. This should also be extended where possible to public responsibility, to include working with citizens groups, teaching and speaking in schools and universities, and doing whatever necessary to inform and protect the public.

Team Building

An agency that develops a total quality program should give careful consideration to the concept of teams as the basic unit of performance. Many studies suggest that teams outperform individuals acting alone or in larger organizational groupings (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 9). A team is defined as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 45). The most important part of that definition is the fact that teams must be committed to performance goals. A common mistake made by top management is promoting teams for the sake of teams. Managers sometimes reorganize entire companies around self-managing teams and risk putting the number of officially designated teams as an objective ahead of performance (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 13).

Teams can keep an organization responsive and innovative and also help integrate employees into the organization. Through teams, feelings of ownership and partnership can be more than just slogans from top management. Teams must have clear norms, rules, and expectations and not be thrown together without purpose or identity. How teams are managed will depend upon a number of factors, including nature of performance demands, level of experience of its members, and strength of the team leader (Tjosvold, 1991, pp. 52, 53). An especially controversial or flashy member might influence the team in the wrong direction, which could require management intervention. However, individualism and controversy need not interfere with performance as long as they are channeled toward team goals (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 13).

Quality Circle

This article will address three diverse types of teams though there are many versions in the corporate world today. The first is a quality circle which is usually composed of voluntary persons within the same department or office. It is designed to solve minor problems with minimal management direction. It is a low stress environment, and the urgency level of problem resolution is also low (Harrington, 1987, pp. 88-103). Quality circles can be good practice for more serious team involvement and, like most teams, are not intended to be permanent.

Process Improvement Team

Process improvement teams are designed to work on specific problems in the work processes. Unlike a task force which is created with urgency to make recommendations about an immediate problem, the process improvement team has the luxury of more time and less pressure from above. The members either will come from the same office or from offices throughout the organization. In the latter case, the cross-functional nature of the team has the advantage of bringing together persons with different roles who can learn to appreciate the problems of others in the organization (Harrington, 1987, pp. 88-103). In my office in Ft. Lauderdale, we are working on a project to improve self-employment investigation and have team members that include both supervision and presentence investigation officers. While specialization has been a catalyst for improved probation work, it also has its downside in the form of jealousies and isolation of different units. Teams can bridge that communication gap and improve work processes that help everyone in the agency.

In South Florida, we have gone even further by breaking up specialized units altogether, with the exception of units of presentence investigation officers, and created permanent teams composed of officers doing general supervision, drug treatment, and special offender work. These teams can work together on projects or serve on other cross-functional teams in the district. They are composed of a supervisor, two "senior" officers, line officers, probation officer assistants (about six), and clerical support personnel. The

rationale behind breaking up specialized units was to create autonomous teams that can deal with all of the problems of probation work. Officers can benefit by having other specialized officers close at hand to staff cases and share expertise.

Whether teams are temporary or permanent, considerable time must be devoted to improvement projects. This can be one of the most significant roadblocks to team building in any agency. Other problems include lack of conviction, personal discomfort and risk, weak performance ethics, and merging of accountability. Teams can also start out strong and become "stuck" due to loss of enthusiasm, lack of purpose, or interpersonal attacks. If this happens, the team might require a new leader or some means to inject new information and approaches into the problem-solving process (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, pp. 20-26).

Self-Managed Team

The third type of team to be discussed is the self-managed team, which may be temporary or permanent, a cross-functional improvement team, or a task force. The key element is that the team has no manager or supervisor. These teams have mostly been experimented with in manufacturing industries with mixed results. However, advocates of self-managed teams see no such limitations in their application. Needless to say, they create high levels of stress in the management ranks, especially among middle managers (Tjosvold, 1991, p. 67). According to Joel Barker in his book on paradigms and discovering the future, organizations will become flatter and middle managers will disappear. He argues that the biggest problem will be to find jobs for those middle managers when groups become self-managed (Barker, 1992).

We have experimented with these groups in South Florida, also with mixed perceptions of success. A presentence unit has operated for more than 1 year with officers approving each other's work and otherwise resolving conflicts within the group. They have experimented with a group evaluation process and other functions normally assigned to a supervisor. The group started out with few rules and little direction from management and was told to work through their problems and evolve naturally as a team. One of the initial assumptions of the group was that officers would perform better knowing their work would be approved by their peers rather than a supervisor.

The arguments against self-managed groups are not difficult to anticipate. The success of such groups may depend upon whether they involve working on special projects or whether they are permanent work teams. The latter would require that the team handle personnel evaluation and other traditional administrative responsibilities. The nature of the work is another key issue, as some experts suggest that more complex, technical, and volatile jobs would require the support and teaching of a manager, especially when staff development is needed (Block, 1989, p. 69). Others believe that law enforcement or quasi-law enforcement jobs are not conducive to self-managed teams because laws and liability issues offer too many constraints (Hoover, 1993).

Other problems might include the inconsistent application of standards if numerous persons within the group are approving work. It would be difficult to allow everyone in the group to approve work, unless team members are all competent veterans. If not, how do you decide the cut-off point for being authorized to approve work? What will prohibit team members from "shopping" for someone to approve their work who will relax standards? Can we ensure better quality by having work approved by those with less knowledge and experience than supervisors? These issues and others will be debated in the future as we wrestle with our paradigms about how employees can best be empowered to achieve total quality.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations about how to implement TQM in a Federal probation office:

1. *Take it slow.* Total quality programs will fail if they become a big show, if central management encourages "paper compliance" (Ishikawa, 1985). A low key approach is critical, especially in the beginning, when staff members are just learning the terms and concepts of TQM. Initial surveys of staff should be simple and include questions about job satisfaction, advancement opportunities, work environment, and levels of quality in the workplace. Ask for suggestions from every employee about what they would do to improve quality. Do this *before* the process begins and remember that "speed is useful only if you are running in the right direction" (Barker, 1992, p. 208).

2. *Walk the talk.* Top management must lead by example if it expects the program to succeed. It must constantly promote the vision and mission of the agency. If this happens, middle managers and others will follow (Whiteley, 1991, p. 17).

3. *Nurture team development.* Teams cannot be thrown together and allowed to drift. They need structure, discipline, and clear policy direction. Most importantly, they must be created with specific performance goals and not merely for the sake of having teams. Remember that teams and traditional hierarchy are not incompatible, so proceed cautiously about restructuring the organization (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p. 5).

4. *Always measure.* Measure whatever possible to tell you what kind of job you are doing. Analyze performance not only against your own past but against others in the field judged to be the best (Whiteley, 1991, p. 17).

5. *Train, train, train.* Training must be an ongoing process, but management needs to be mindful of the time constraints on staff members to get their routine work done. Outside consultants should be chosen carefully, but no matter who is responsible for training, they must be able to demonstrate how to apply TQM concepts to supervising offenders and writing presentence reports.

6. *Focus on the customer.* Constantly look for ways to help your internal and external customers. Don't ignore the little things such as returning phone calls promptly or the bigger things such as completing collaterals on time. In Ft. Lauderdale we established a "guidelines liaison" with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Federal Public Defender's Office to improve the consistency of guidelines application, which also assists the court by resolving more issues before sentencing. Mailing presentence reports to attorneys has saved time and improved the process of disclosure. Collecting assessments during the presentence stage saves supervision officers the trouble of tracking those down. These are just a few of the efforts we have made to assist our customers and make the work processes more efficient.

7. *Streamline.* Improve response time throughout the agency by reducing paperwork and consolidating functions in the work processes. Examples include making correspondence and chronological reports brief, using macros in producing PSI's, and using new forms such as the court petitions in Monograph 109.

8. *Know your paradigms.* Always be mindful of the tendency to resist change, especially when it may drastically alter the way you do things. Middle managers must wrestle with concepts such as self-managed teams and the need to shift away from the control mentality. Part of my motivation for writing this article was the desire to learn more about these intrusions into my otherwise safe and secure world. Though that security has been shaken, the experiences in my district with TQM have awakened me to a new way of looking at management and how we do our work. I encourage other offices throughout the system to consider the concepts of TQM as a means to serve the court and the community better.

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