

## Superior Quality

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My wife and I recently decided to have the interior of our house painted, so we contacted a painting contractor that had performed similar work for us before. When we received his quote, it was considerably higher than we had planned, however we did not hesitate to immediately give him a check for a down-payment. We wanted him to get started right away. We've used this contractor before, and even under extraordinary scrutiny, we've always found the results to be exceptional.

I have to emphasize at this point, that the purpose of this story isn't to point out that I like to spend money. In fact, as I get older, I'm becoming quite cheap - each penny becomes much harder to part with (I must admit at this point, that I did manage to "haggle" down the price slightly, but this was done more as a matter of principle than by any other motivation). The fact that the quality of this contractor's work has always been so high merited the additional cost, from our perspective.

I'm sure that at least one person reading this article will, by now, have noticed that I didn't mention getting any additional quotes from any other painting contractors. I didn't shop for the "best price" around. This is absolutely correct - I wasn't as concerned about competitive pricing as I was about superior service. This is our home, where we spend most of our free time, and we wanted it painted by the best painter we could find. We weren't looking for a commodity service; we were looking for a craftsman. When the work was completed, I didn't want to see (and wouldn't accept) paint spatters on my floors, over-run on the ceilings, or streaks on the walls.

I'm presenting this story as I think it serves as a good example of the business advantages associated with providing the highest quality goods and services. If you consider your business, which category does your company fall into? Do you focus on providing commodity services/products at cost-competitive prices, or do you focus on providing superior results?

While almost every organization commits to the latter (superior products and/or services), many organizations have great difficulty making inroads to realizing this objective. We continue to search for new ways to improve our competitive position in the marketplace; however we tend to focus more on competitive pricing and increased sales volume than on the results of our performance, often considering our quality failures as "part of doing business". In many cases, these failures are even considered as part of our budgeting process.

While the connection should be obvious, many organizations fail to realize the true impact of product and process performance on the overall performance of the organization. Quality problems destroy customer trust, which in turn reduces our sales volume and/or causes us to lower our prices. Quality problems erode our profit margins as a consequence of rework, warranty repairs and customer back-charges.

In contrast, superior performance creates a stronger brand image, builds customer loyalty, allows us to charge a fair price, and our profit margins become more robust, due to lower costs as a result of fewer quality problems. Increased sales are generated through referrals and word-of-mouth, instead of aggressive sales tactics and discounts. Instead of planning for poor quality, shouldn't we be focusing our resources on providing superior performance?



Just as a final note, as of this writing, the painting of our house has been completed. The results are wonderful, and have well exceeded our expectations. We both got what we wanted: the painter got paid what they believed they were worth and we got the results we wanted, when we wanted them. In my mind, this worked out as a bargain, and it was money well spent. Not only would I refer them to others, I will use them again.

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