

The importance of quality in creating competitive advantage



Introduction

Most businesses compete with other firms in their market. There are a number of ways to do this. For instance, it could be on prices, products or service. Portakabin competes on quality. Its products are at the top end of the market. The Portakabin Group product is modular buildings. It is the market leader with 17% of the UK market. Its customers include local authorities, hospitals, schools and other companies. The sort of buildings each need is different. Schools may want classrooms, hospitals may want clinics, businesses may want offices. Portakabin meets all these demands.

Quality

Quality relates to how well a product does what it is meant to do. There are two sources for quality:

- ▶ Internal. The Group makes sure it provides not just good products but also all the extras a client might need. For instance, carpets and climate control systems.
- ▶ External. Meeting building standards. The Group meets the international standard ISO9001.

Quality also involves keeping pace with new technology and building solutions.

Product

Product covers services as well as goods. Portakabin provides key services and will even manage projects from start to finish. Modular buildings are constructed off-site. No building leaves the site until it has been checked to ensure it complies with demanding customer standards.

Process

Modules come in standard shapes and sizes. The way they are put together and what goes inside makes them unique. In this way they meet each client's needs. The quality systems approach ensures quality of process. The stages are:

1. *Say what you do.* Teams know what the job requires. They can state the process and their role in it.
2. *Do what you say.* Teams carry out their tasks.
3. *Record what you have done.* Everyone knows the current position, what's been done and what still needs to be done.
4. *Review what you have done.* This is to check progress and spot problems.
5. *If problems are spotted, take steps to solve them.*
6. *Then start the process again.*

Service

The Group sets itself standards for quality service. It:

- ▶ Guarantees to complete all projects on time and on budget.
- ▶ Contacts customers after delivery to check they are happy.
- ▶ Aims to solve problems within 24 hours.
- ▶ Operates a Customer Charter laying down standards.
- ▶ Offers a complete plan, design and build service.
- ▶ Runs a monthly customer satisfaction survey.

Conclusion

In a competitive market, Portakabin stays ahead by ensuring quality of process and offering quality products and services. It also conforms to key standards like ISO9001.

