

# The importance of quality in creating competitive advantage

## Introduction

Most businesses are in competition with other businesses. There are numerous ways to gain competitive advantage. For example, lower prices, better products, better service. Portakabin has decided to emphasise quality. It has positioned its products at the top end of the market with premium prices. The Portakabin Group specialises in modular buildings. Its customers include local authorities, hospitals, schools and other companies.

## Quality

Portakabin's brand vision is: 'To provide peace of mind for our customers across Europe through quality buildings and services.' Quality relates to how well a product does what it is meant to do. There are two sources for quality. Internally, Portakabin ensures it provides both good products and any extras a client might need such as carpets and climate control systems. Externally, Portakabin buildings conform to national building standards. It also meets international standard ISO9001 and 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 may leave the production site until it complies with demanding customer standards.



## Process

Modules to be assembled come in standard shapes and sizes. The way they are put together and the interiors make them customised for each client. The quality systems approach ensures quality through six stages:

1. *Say what you do.* Teams working on a process know what the job requires. Everyone involved understands the process and their role within it.
2. *Do what you say.* Once they understand the process, team members are able to implement it.
3. *Record what you have done.* Construction teams record all actions taken, so that all know the current position, what has gone on before and what still needs to be done.
4. *Review what you have done.* Records are regularly reviewed, both to ensure delivery targets can be met and to identify any problem areas.
5. *Take remedial action where necessary.*
6. *Then start the process again.*

## Service

Portakabin contacts customers after delivery to check that they are happy. It aims to resolve any difficulties within 24 hours. It also:

- ▶ Guarantees to complete all projects on time and on budget
- ▶ Operates a Customer Charter laying down standards customers should expect
- ▶ Offers a complete plan, design and build service
- ▶ Runs a comprehensive 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.