I know It When I See It

John Guaspari
A fable

• Company A had always been so dominant, so proud of its history and innovation.

• The second company in the competition would keep on changing.

• Company B was second on the list for quite a few quarters.
Company A had first dismissed the threat from Company B saying “They never had ideas of their own. How could they hurt us”

Company A had become complacent

Slowly Company B begun to gain market share
• The Boss of Company A took feedback from some customers about why they were using products of company B.

• Quality was the issue but the customers could not say more about the quality but mentioned that “I know it when I see it”
• As a solution to the quality issue, the Boss of company A told the employees that, “When everyone works harder, did better, then we will have better quality”.
• Instead of increasing the morale, it brought their morale down
• Next month, sales went down, profits went down.
• People are only human. Mistakes are inevitable. The key to improving Quality is in catching those mistakes as soon as they occur.

• The Boss thought more inspection would help.

• He doubled the work force.
• For every old employee, there was a new employee
• The new work force would inspect everything that the old workers do, as soon as they do it.
• The mistakes will be caught as soon as they occur. Nothing will slip through
• The quality problems would be overcome by more inspection
• A month later, things were worse than before

• Profits were down, market share was down

• Morale was down
Problem

• Neither knew what his job was anymore
• Neither one had responsibility anymore—each just assumed the other, acting as inspector, would catch his mistakes.
• No wonder quality was down
• It became impossible for people to know where their jobs left off and the next person’s job began.
Boss’s corollary to Parkinson’s law

In a closed system, the number of mistakes made expands to fill the inspection capacity available.
• If morale goes down, quality goes down
• If quality goes down, market share goes down
• If market share goes down, profitability goes down
• If profitability goes down, the company goes down
• It is a lot easier to prevent the mistake from happening in the first place than to have to fix it after the fact
• The Boss changed the way of thinking from an Inspection to a Prevention mind set and things began to fall in place
• Quality was up
• Morale was up
• Productivity was up
• Profitability was up
• The irony was that the move from inspection to prevention had been relatively easy
• The inspection team became the prevention team
• The prevention team gave loads of useful prevention information.
• He made his main men in-charge of managing information
• Things were looking to fall in place.
• They thought that they had found the solution to their problem.

• Then one day a customer walks into the Boss’s office with two complaints about the quality of the products. And who then walked away – as an ex-customer.
• The customer had a manufacturing complaint and a design complaint.

• Instead of **really** listening to him, they were too busy clarifying the distinction between design and manufacturing for him.

**Who are we to try to prove that we know more about Quality than our customers do?**
• When our customers tell us we have a Quality problem, we turn to our specifications and tolerances to see if they are right.
• Of Course they are right!.
• Customers aren’t interested in our specifications.
• They are interested in the answer to one simple question: “Did the product do what I expected it to do?”
• If the answer is yes, then it’s a quality product.
• If the answer is no, then it isn’t
• At that point, our specifications and tolerances aren’t ‘wrong’. They are just irrelevant.
• Quality is much more than just the ‘absence of negatives’. It is positive and powerful in its own right.

• If you fix quality within each department, it would unravel again as soon as it crosses the departmental lines.

• Quality requires a high level of cooperation and coordination throughout the organisation
• Quality is a matter of survival:

_Sometimes people get caught up with all kinds of fuzzy, abstract “quality is a warm puppy” notions. That’s wrong. Quality is profit and productivity and market share_
• Quality may not be free, but it’s a lot expensive than the alternatives

*It takes so much time and money trying to fix Quality problems. It is a whole lot cheaper if you do not have those problems in the first place*

• Quality is everyone’s job. But it’s management’s responsibility.

*Management’s job is to lead. Leadership requires two things: movement and followers. And the movement has to come first.*
Most Quality problems are built into the system. People want to do high-quality work and they will if the system will let them. That’s where management’s movement has to go: toward improving the system.

The first step toward improving the system is to get good data about what needs fixing. Before you can make something good, you have to know what is bad. And the people who are in the best position to have such data are the people with their hands right on the process.
• The second step toward improving the system is moving from an Inspection mind-set to a Prevention mind-set.

It’s a lot less expensive to prevent defects from occurring in the first place than to have some people making them, others finding them and others fixing them.
• We approach it as though we are the experts who could rely on some sort of intuitive feel for the ultimate Quality of our products.

• We would get impatient with our customers, who couldn’t say anything more precise about Quality than ‘I know it when I see it’.

• But they are the ones entitled to rely on their intuition when it comes to knowing what quality is.
• They pay us to be precise and rigorous about that definition....to determine what their requirements are......and then to do whatever it takes to meet those requirements

• They pay us to have a firm handle on Quality, and we behave as though it is the other way around
• Quality is everyone’s job. It must start with the management. Management’s job is to lead people toward a goal and Quality is the only goal that matters.

• We have to manage Quality as a whole- an integrated whole that is much more than the sums of its parts
• Listen to what your customer are telling you about Quality. They are not buying a product. They are buying your assurances that their expectations for that product will be met.

• Your customers may not have all the hard business facts. They may not be aware of your specifications and your standards and your inspection reports - all of which are critical to your ability to make a high-quality product.
• Just because the customer is not able to speak with a lot of precision, don’t assume that what he has to say doesn’t have a lot of value.

• He may not be able to give you a precise definition of Quality, but one thing’s for certain- He knows it when he sees it
THANK YOU