

## Essays on Management for Design Professionals

### Introduction

This series of Essays has been 47 years in the making. It probably started in 1967 when I took my first engineering job in a dungy plant office at the then largest unbleached paper mill in the world in Savannah, Georgia. This is where I got my first taste of how engineers function and communicate with others. My learning continued as I moved from the paper mill to an electric utility company to an electrical contracting company, and then, in 1975, to a consulting engineering firm. I first put pencil to paper in the late 1980s as our engineering firm reorganized from a departmental structure to a team structure. Creating a minor stir in the engineering community, we had the opportunity to put our theories to work and to publish some articles and papers about the transformation, which focused our company on the customer, rather than the technical disciplines. I even did a seminar for the American Consulting Engineering Council (ACEC). It was videotaped and last time I checked, ACEC was still selling it. I believe the ideas are still valid, but my haircut and plaid bellbottoms certainly date the video. During the period following 1980, I read everything I could about sales, marketing, business development, management, leadership, and quality management. The authors that imprinted themselves on my brain are Tom Peters, Theodore Levitt, Edwards Deming, Peter Drucker, Warren Bennis, Burt Nanus, Eliyahu Goldratt, William Oncken, Donald Wass, Terrence Deal, Allen Kennedy, Robert Waterman, Henry Rogers, and others. Discovering that there really is nothing new under the sun, my self help phase had come to rest by the time Stephen Covey published *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. By then I had moved on to history and biography, where I found Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Lincoln, and Lee to be more edifying, and spirituality, where I found that God help completely trumps self help. I have heard it said that it's what you learn after you know it all that counts. That's certainly the way it has worked for me. After speaking and publishing on subjects like team management, project management, and quality management (all of which fully grasped), I help found a new engineering firm where I served as managing partner for the better part of a dozen years. This firm merged with a larger firm in November of 2008. Because I fully realize that no one cares what I read last night, much less last month or last year, the reader will not find many quotes or references in these essays. Internalizing Edwards Deming and then sharing my experience putting Deming's ideas to work in my day-to-day life is not plagiarism. On the other hand, I will give credit where credit is due.

### The Customer

The terms "customer" and "client" will be used interchangeably in these essays. Some engineers will find this annoying, because some consider the term "customer" unprofessional. It has been said that the customer is always right, but the client is not. It is, however, incumbent upon the engineer to make the client feel right. In quality management terms, customer is a broader term than client. Traditionally, the client is the person with whom we have a contract to deliver services. In the case of an engineer under contract with an architect who is under contract with an owner, both the architect and the owner would be considered clients. What about the relationship between the engineer and the construction manager (CM), where the engineer provides vital services to the CM? The CM, general contractor (GC), subcontractors, and even equipment vendors can be (and should be) considered customers. We often hear people (especially quality managers) refer to internal and external customers. For example, the specification writer's internal customers will include the engineer. The engineer's customers include the project manager. There are two types of people in a professional firm: (1) Those who serve the customer and, (2) Those who serve those who serve the customer. Enough said about the distinction

between customers and clients. They are all customers to me. If you don't like this, then get over it. Successful firms MUST have a service mentality. Everyone who depends upon me or needs information or performance from me is my customer.

I will continue to add Essays to this site. So, please come back for more. Meanwhile, if you have comments or feedback, or if you want me to hurry up and add more Essays, you can contact me at [hugh@nash-consult.com](mailto:hugh@nash-consult.com) or at 615-268-3793. Hugh O. Nash, Jr. PE, FIEEE, FASHE