

History Of Quality

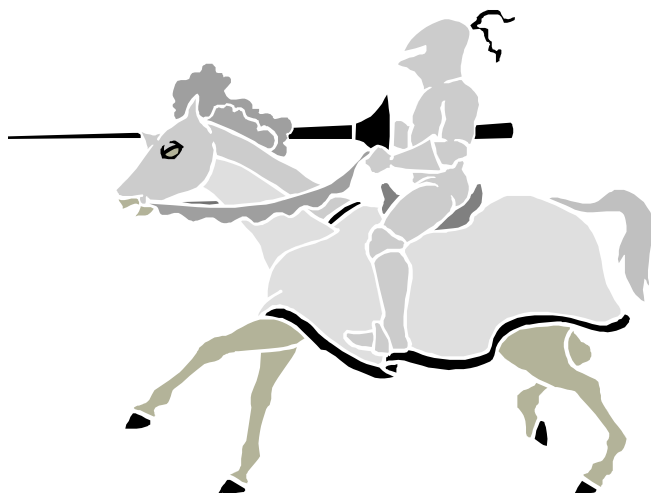
Quality management is older than Christianity: there are records of metrology (the practice of measuring), specifications for products and processes, and inspectors from a number of pre-Christian civilisations, including in the construction of the Egyptian pyramids.

By 1000 A.D., independent product certification—where a third party declares a product to be adequate to a particular task—was practised. Charles I of England is reputed to have established product standardisation during the 17th Century, by decreeing that all armour was to conform to a particular pattern, rather than be at the whim of every knight.

Central Inspection Departments were in use before 1900.

However, most of the techniques of modern Quality Management were introduced by three Americans: Walter A. Shewhart, Joseph M. Juran, and W. Edwards Deming, in the decades leading up to and during World War II. These practices were heavily used by the US military components industry during the war, and were a major contributing factor to the Allied victory, particularly in the Pacific.

The principal reason that Japan now leads the



world in quality is that these same experts—Shewhart, Juran, and Deming—were used by the American administration after the war to assist with the reconstruction of Japanese industry: the Japanese business leaders listened to what they said, used it, and developed on it, whilst American industry (and Australian, English and some other Western countries) ignored the message until Japan had already stolen the lead.

It is also notable that the use of Quality Control was made compulsory in Germany from the late 19th Century, and in Japan in the mid 1950's. By shortly after the First World War, German products were recognised by their quality and excellence; and that by the early 1980's, Japanese products were recognised for the same reasons.

History repeats itself; historians repeat each other.