

Quality Qorner

Quality System Essentials for Life

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It occurred to me that if I'm going to run around several countries telling people how to apply the Quality System Essentials (QSEs) to make laboratories better, perhaps I should look at how to apply the QSEs to my life, as well. If I'm going to tell people that "quality is doing the right things and doing those things right," then perhaps I should look to see if I'm living what I preach to others. The QSEs are a universal basic framework for quality in any work, so why not apply the same framework to my life?

Here are some checklist questions about each QSE as regards life. What might your answers be?

QSE Organization: Do I have a personal mission statement? Do I have documented goals and objectives for my business, my professional development, and my personal life? Have I articulated my personal values?

QSE Facilities and Safety: Have I reduced the impact of my home's energy use and emissions on the environment? Have I removed any unsafe conditions from inside and around my house? Do I practice regular household safety, such as proper storage of household chemicals and sharp tools?

QSE Personnel: Do I regularly attend to my personal health and spiritual development as well as to continuing education and professional development? Do I practice personal ethics? Do I get trained for using a piece of new house of yard equipment and am I competent to use it?

QSE Equipment: Do I perform regular preventive maintenance on my house, car, and computer system according to the recommended schedules? Have I determined the actual operating temperatures of my oven and refrigerator to verify proper function?

QSE Purchasing and Inventory: Do I spend money within my means? Do I pay bills on time and maintain a good credit rating with those from whom I buy or borrow? Do I have a documented inventory of major items of furniture and household goods for insurance purposes? Do I manage my inventory of "stuff" to the minimum necessary? Do I check expiration dates of the food in my refrigerator and pantry and the drugs in my medicine cabinet?

QSE Process Control: Do I have efficient and effective processes for household duties such as housecleaning and grocery shopping? For best results, do I always follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer without personal deviations? Do I always quality control a new recipe by fixing it for myself first before making it for guests?

QSE Documents and Records: Are my passport, driver's license, insurance policies, and vaccinations up to date? Are the serial numbers of major household items and the account numbers of credit cards, bank accounts, and investments

documented? Have I stored important papers in a fireproof file box or offsite? Have I maintained all records needed to defend my tax returns? Can I access the documents and records when I need them?

QSE Information Management: Do I regularly update my personal computer passwords? Do I protect my home computer system from unauthorized access? Have I taken precautions to protect my identity? Do I maintain confidentiality of a friend's disclosed secrets?

QSE Occurrence Management: When things go wrong, do I blame someone else or look for the root cause in my own actions? Do I look for underlying trends or patterns in things that don't go well for me? Do I follow up when someone complains about me?

QSE Assessments: Do I periodically measure my progress with respect to personal goals and objectives? Do I get regular physical and dental checkups and strive to meet recommendations for my age, height, and weight group?

QSE Customer Service: Do I know what the needs and expectations are of my customers, family, and friends for me? How will I know if I'm meeting them? Am I meeting them?

QSE Process Improvement: What is my personal philosophy for continual self-improvement? Do I make any efforts in this regard? Do I follow Stephen Covey's "7 habits"?

Oh, gee—what a shame that there's not enough space for me to answer all these questions in front of you! I did find some "no" answers, so I guess I have my New Year's plan cut out for me.

It has always amazed me that in the laboratory I could metrically measure 15 milliliters of a reagent and know how much liquid that represented but I could not easily manage a European food recipe that asked for 70 mL of milk and 235 grams of flour. It may be easy to apply the QSEs in a laboratory context but will likely take some effort on my part to apply them to my life. However, I know that if I do, life will be easier, if not better.

This Month's Quality Quote:

"Man is a kind of inverted thermometer; the bulb uppermost and the column of self-evaluation is all the time going up and down."

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*



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