

# Visualizing Your Organization's QI Culture Growth: A QI Culture Map

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## Dan Ward and John W. Moran

### Introduction

Culture is difficult to observe, but you know that it exists within your team or your organization; since it is that ethereal something that hangs in the air and influences how work gets done. Culture also impacts and determines the overall mood of the workplace. A Quality Improvement (QI) Culture is defined as shared beliefs, perceptions, norms, values, and expectations of individuals and the organization regarding QI and customer satisfaction. Public health agencies want to promote a QI Culture in order to offer the best possible services to their community and improve their population's health. Developing a QI Culture takes time and requires a focused effort while staff learn QI principles and methods, and make them part of how they conduct business.

Over the past few years, Performance Improvement Managers (PIMs) have been nurturing and building QI Cultures in their organizations, but have struggled with how to measure the growth of the culture. PIMs have surveyed employees to see how attitudes have changed, trained employees in new skills, used pre- and post-tests to see how the knowledge improved, and tracked the progress of QI projects. Organizations desire a QI Culture where all employees have the following characteristics:

- ✓ Relentless passion for customer satisfaction
- ✓ Keen instincts for finding areas to improve
- ✓ Focus on continuous improvement in all areas
- ✓ Willingness to embrace risk and learn new skills
- ✓ Nurturing others in the process by being QI champions
- ✓ Excellence is the constant goal

But the following question remains unanswered:

- Do we really know that the QI culture is growing and embedding itself in the organization?
- Do the measures we track tell the whole story?

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Dan Ward developed an innovative approach to help visually capture QI Culture growth while working for the Division of Public Health, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. He used Microsoft Office Visio software to visualize how the QI Culture changed using an organizational chart format as well as a floor plan. For the purpose and intent of this tool, the scope of a culture was defined as quality activities. All other indicators, such as values, beliefs, etc. were not included for measuring the distribution and growth of a QI Culture.

## **The Tool**

Using Microsoft Office Visio, which is a diagramming and vector graphics application software, the user can create maps, organization charts, and floor plans to show where QI was introduced and how it has spread. To support this process it is a good idea to develop an Excel spread sheet to track the following:

- Employee listing and location (optional)
- Who was trained (ex. Bag Lunch Training by PIM, Consultants, PIM Quality Improvement Presentations to departments/bureaus, etc.)
  - What type of training
  - When - date
- Projects they worked on
  - Date started
  - Date ended
- Future Projects
  - Scheduled start date
- QI Assistance (Optional)
  - Date given

## **Potential Usages**

PIMs can use this tool to show QI Culture statewide growth, overall agency growth and bureau or program growth of the culture change as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

This tool has uses on all levels. Management can get the big picture of distribution and growth in the organization that allows them to make well informed decisions. The tool can also help Program Managers identify who is and is not engaged with quality activities: training, QI projects, etc. Last but not least, the PIM (e.g. Project Manager) can reflect on the big picture, or understand on a routine basis whether the whole organization is growing and if there are isolated areas that need attention. This approach could also be used to show who is certified in various skills or needs to be recertified. Remember QI tools are visual; this mapping tool helps make our invisible cultures visible.

## Cautions

1. The definition of a ‘culture’ refers to only quality improvement activities. Please make sure the intended audience understands what this tool is intended to measure and its limitations with regards to measuring culture distribution and growth; it does not measure a culture’s growth in the traditional sense like values, beliefs, etc.
2. Define the boundary of QI activities (i.e., Operational Definition). As a PIM you may want to list just your grant QI activities and ad hoc QI activities that benefit the division as a whole. For example, improving the division’s contracting process, documents approval process, etc. are activities that are making the organization more efficient and effective (i.e., a cultural change). On the other hand, you may want to illustrate all QI activities performed in your organization. In either case, be explicit so your audience understands the boundary. Otherwise staff may wonder why their quality project is not listed when they thought it should have been shown on the quality tool.
3. Develop the baseline for the organization before you start showing growth. You need a baseline even if you have to go back a few years, since it shows where the organization started. This way you will know if change occurs.
4. PIMs facilitate the QI Culture growth and leadership directs the growth rate. Do not try to push the QI Culture if the organization is not ready or leadership is not supportive.
5. Do not track too many items in the Excel spreadsheet; the more granular this becomes, the more you will be the “Keystone Cop” chasing everything and most of it will not be relevant. Use the Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS) rule to manage this tool.
6. Share the QI Culture tool on a quarterly, biannual or annual basis; it changes slowly, so weekly or monthly updates may not show any change.
7. Present the QI Culture tool to leadership on a regular basis and let them interpret where and for whom improvement is needed. Your job is to develop and present the data, and not to make it a competition or a report card. Otherwise, people will spend time defending their position rather than their department activity engaged in QI Culture changes. Remember this is a tool to help people visualize the changing culture, and not to punish them.

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# Division of Public Health Quality Culture Tool

- Attended Bag Lunch or QI training
- Purchased Visio software for QI tool development
- QI Assistance

- QI Project
- Future QI project



# DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## Bureau of Laboratories Quality Cultural Tool

- Attended Bag Lunch or QI training
- Purchased Visio software for QI tool development
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- QI Project
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