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Are the perspectives of quality independent of one another? If not, describe ways in which they are interrelated.

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How can an understanding of the multiple dimensions of quality lead to improved product and service designs?

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What is your concept of quality? Is it multidimensional, or does it focus on a single dimension such as features, reliability, or conformance? Explain your answer.

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Describe an instance in which you and a co-worker (or superior) perceived the needs of a customer very differently. How did your differences in perception influence how each of you wanted to meet your customer's needs?

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Cases

Case 1-1 FedEx: Managing Quality Day and Night

FedEx Homepage: www.fedex.com

As darkness falls across America and most businesses are locking up for the evening, one company is gearing up for a long night's work. FedEx, the world leader in the overnight package delivery market, delivers more than 7.6 million packages per business day. Most of us know FedEx as the overnight delivery company with white delivery vans, courteous drivers, and the distinctive purple-and-orange FedEx logo. But behind what the casual observer sees is a very complex company with the capacity to deliver millions of packages to millions of addresses around the globe overnight.

Throughout the course of virtually every day and night, FedEx mobilizes its army of 165,000 employees, 47,500 vans and trucks, and 647 planes to get the job done.

For FedEx, getting the job done means managing quality 24 hours per day, with a watchful eye on customer expectations. The company's goals are simple: 100% customer satisfaction, 100% on-time deliveries, and 100% accurate information available on every shipment to every location around the world. Although these sound like far-fetched goals, the company goes to great lengths to try to make them a reality. One of the principal weapons that FedEx uses in pursuit of its goals is its total commitment to quality management.

Quality management at FedEx encompasses all its operations. Although the company is the acknowledged leader in the air freight industry, a formal Quality Improvement Process (QIP) plays an integral role in all the company's activities.¹⁰

¹⁰www.fedex.com.

At the heart of the QIP program is the philosophy that quality must be a part of the way that FedEx does business, not part of the time, but all the time. As a result, themes such as "Do it right the first time," "Make the first time you do it the only time anyone has to," and "Q = P" (quality = productivity) are important parts of the FedEx culture. To reinforce these themes, the company teaches its employees the 1–10–100 rule. According to the rule, if a problem is caught and fixed as soon as it occurs, it costs a certain amount of time and money to correct. If a mistake is caught later in a different department or location, it may cost 10 times that much to repair. And if a mistake is caught by a customer, it may cost 100 times as much to fix.

A number of substantive strategies have been implemented by FedEx to support its quality efforts. Quality action teams (QATs) design work processes to support new product and service offerings. A set of service quality indicators (SQIs) has been established to determine the main areas of customers' perception of service. Through careful tracking of these indicators, the company generates a weekly summary of how well it is meeting its customer satisfaction targets. An SQI team works through problems revealed by the indicators. For example, if problems were being created by confusion in FedEx labeling instructions, the team would work on improving the clarity of the instructions. Some of the company's tactics to ensure total quality are extraordinary. For example, every night FedEx launches an empty airliner from Portland, Oregon, bound for Memphis. The jet follows a course that brings it close to several FedEx terminal airports. The purpose of the jet is to swoop down and pick up FedEx packages if any of the company's regularly scheduled airplanes is experiencing mechanical difficulty.