

Comprehensive Approach to Quality is Yielding Results at Chrysler Group

March 1, 2010, Geneva - Chrysler Group continues to invest in quality improvements and has created a stronger, centralized Quality organization. In two years, the quality staff has increased from 200 people to 1,500 staffers working on a coordinated strategy.

"Our 2010 vehicles have the best reliability in the company's history due to continuous improvements of existing products," said Doug Betts, Senior Vice President--Quality, Chrysler Group. "As more than 75 percent of our product line changes by the end of this year, we have a big opportunity to demonstrate the quality advancements we've integrated into the design, development and building of all Chrysler Group vehicles."

Customer Satisfaction Teams

Two years after they were introduced, the Customer Satisfaction Teams (CSTs) are eliminating one of the classic issues associated with many Quality departments: problem-solving ownership. Made up of cross-functional teams that measure their success only by their ability to improve defined quality scores, the CST structure is meant to eliminate the potential for a "not my fault" attitude.

"It's about putting people in the right place to foster a problem-solving mentality," Betts said. "Quality must be a shared ownership and CSTs create that environment."

Each CST is comprised of 6 - 15 problem solvers with a variety of expertise. Chrysler has 14 CSTs, one for each vehicle system (engine, interior, wiring, etc) encompassing the range of Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge vehicles. These teams are empowered to improve customer satisfaction for their system or area. They gauge their success only by how well they do that, without regard to the origin of the customer dissatisfaction.

Defining "Quality"

In the automobile industry, "quality" has been a broadly used term referring to many different aspects of customer satisfaction. At Chrysler, Quality has now been defined into six categories that may affect customer satisfaction: Ordinary, Dissatisfaction, Regulatory, Perceived, Performance and Service, both before and after the sale.

"We now have a clear definition of quality and how to measure it," Betts explained. "A big part of the customer's definition of quality is reliability, but it's also perceived quality and the way a customer is treated before and after the sale."

To improve performance quality-how a vehicle stacks up against its competition-engineers now start a project by measuring approximately 320 physical characteristics of the best-in-class vehicles. Criteria such as acceleration, braking, handling, seat comfort, fuel economy and storage space are benchmarked. This establishes high standards so vehicles are designed and built to compete with the best.

Chrysler Group also created the Perceived Quality (PQ) Team in recognition that many consumers form opinions the first time they see a vehicle, whether it's at an auto show or in a neighbor's driveway. The PQ team analyzes vehicles' fit-and-finish, materials, ergonomics, and even the sound quality of moveable parts such as doors, seats and storage compartments. Much of the PQ evaluation is now done in the digital design phase, so product improvements can be made before any tooling investments.

"Our comprehensive strategy to improve quality and customer satisfaction has prompted significant changes in how Chrysler Group develops, builds and sells cars," Betts said. "Our ultimate goal is to make high quality vehicles that owners will be proud to recommend to their friends and family members."

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