

# AN INSIGHT INTO THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEES AND BUSINESSES IN FOOD QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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## Abstract

Food quality management or we might abbreviate it as FQM has been a topic of discussion for decades among food professionals, researchers, bloggers, and critics, but even today the question is “How should a food and beverage establishment from small to large maintain the highest standards of food quality?” The process of food quality is not just determined by the quality of ingredients but also by the various other factors that are involved in its journey from store to platter.

In this research paper, we would mainly be looking at the relationship between the role of business and employees towards understanding, implementing measures, and maintaining food quality in the food and beverage ecosystem. The study will help its readers to understand that food quality is not just a responsibility of one individual but a collective effort, food quality starts from the time of receiving to the time the food is cooked in the kitchen. This paper will also discuss some of the solutions that can help an organization to further innovate and find different ways to maintain quality standards. As you will go thru the research paper it will also reflect on some of the common shortcomings in the food quality management system. We will not only be highlighting these shortcomings and challenges but also discuss the possible solutions to these challenges.

In conclusion of this paper, we all would have a better understanding of how food quality can be maintained and the various steps that can be taken to maintain food quality. With this paper, we want to communicate and stress the importance of food quality.

**Key Words:** Food Quality Management, receiving, issuing, storage, employees

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## Introduction

Since the evolution of humans food had always been the key to the mere existence of the human race or shall we say the existence of any living organism. As the tide of time passed and humans became more and more aware of the food and developed new ways of cooking, the world saw a new phase that influenced the food industry worldwide by affecting the availability of ingredients through changes in food production, methods of procurement and distribution thus bringing a huge change in the food culture and habits of consumers. In today's competitive food world the two factors that influence the decision of the consumers are the nutritional value of the food, its convenience, and the taste. The quality of food changes during the supply chain and also depends on the environmental factors, technological

process, development, control, improvement and quality assurance on the part of the vendor or supplier. (Luning et al., 2002).

The quality of food can be characterized based on two models the interior features that are the taste, texture, nutritional value and other physical and chemical factors like pH, composition, microbial contamination, etc. The factor that influences the quality of food is the external characteristics which may not be directly related to the characteristics of the product but can influence the perception of the consumers. These characteristics are associated with the marketing, legislative and acceptability of the product in terms of brand name, etc. Legislations play a very important role in the quality or the characteristics of the products. Legislations are one of the key determinants of the requirements and the restrictions related to the characteristics of the products, technological conditions and control system. Food quality management or referred to as FQM in this research paper is one the most important aspect or one must say the nerve center of the food industry. The food industry has always faced an enormous amount of challenges and one of them is supply chain management. Every day the food industry receives perishable and non-perishable food from around the globe in frozen, vacuum-packed, or even fresh state ready for processing and subsequent consumption, however, every day the industry faces the challenge of making sure that food received is of the best quality and at a most affordable price. The mantra for the long-lasting success of any food organization is the knowledge, skill, creativity, and morale of the people who work for that organization. Yes, the topic of this research paper focuses not just on the role of the employees in quality management but also the role of technology in quality management but technology is of no use if the people who are using it are not skilled and competent enough to utilize that technology most efficiently and effectively. Moving forward in this research paper a focus will be laid on the relationship between employees, business and technology and their roles in managing the quality of food.

Focus on its employees enables a company's development and improvement, whereas business ethics ensures public health and safety protection, environmental protection, and life quality improvement. The company management's responsibility lies foremost in education, worker training and development, thus enabling a direct and indirect influence on the foodstuff quality and satisfying consumer requests in terms of foodstuff quality characteristics.

### **Food Quality Management**

Control and management of food quality of products to be used in the food industry are very important to understand and analyze the characteristics of quality of food because the perception of the consumers depends upon the food supply chain. Consumers analyze and evaluate the food based on its internal characteristics (taste, texture, packaging) without taking into consideration the other important aspects (nutritional value).

The consumer demands that are taken into consideration and are responsible for initiating the management of supply chain and subsequently food quality management have been divided into 4 groups (Hruskar et al., 2010):

1. **Consumer demands** – The demands of the consumers refer but are not restricted to the need for production methods, availability of food material and quality of food and environment;
2. **Productivity and technology** – This includes how technology can help in the production of products (IT, machinery, logistics)
3. **Management** – This includes the regulations, legislations, and policies (transition to a market economy, opening towards the global market, parallel approximation, and so on);
4. **Resources** – the need for capital, raw materials, labor and fixed assets for improvement of products and production processes is imperative for the quality of food products.

Over the years the preview of the food business has increased and due to the ongoing competition in the market food businesses have to constantly be on the path of innovation and improvements making sure that the costs do not go high. Food quality management is an ongoing process for the development of products to suit consumer needs. The process of FQM involves the execution of strategic activities to ensure the achievement of desired goals. The implementation does not only include achieving the set objectives but also steps to achieve the goals that an organization was not able to achieve.

The kind of tools to be used by the management for the implementation of these practices depend on the critical data of quality and food products safety that is related to technological compliance. The use of statistical tools such as the Pareto diagram and standard deviation also helped management to reach a conclusive decision.

The second most important aspect of FQM is the education and the skills given to the staff to understand the basics and relevant legislative guidelines related to food quality. The staff should be educated on the relevant technologies and management policies that have been designed for the specific quality control system. The upskilling of the staff should be done at various levels so that can also understand the methods of statistical data interpretation that would help to understand the data received from various sources about quality management and will help them to take decisions at their level.

Moreover, it is important for all staff working in the food industry to understand the nutritional value of the food and the ingredients that they are using for cooking the food.

### **Do the Job Correctly**

Any organization can only attain excellence & brilliance in its products and services by taking the measure of improving and empowering employees (VanDevender 2011). It has always been evident that quality management is directly linked to the actions and performance of the employees. One of the articles titled Total Quality Human Resources Management – TQHRM {Van Devender, T. (2001)}. The emerging concept of AACC has been explained

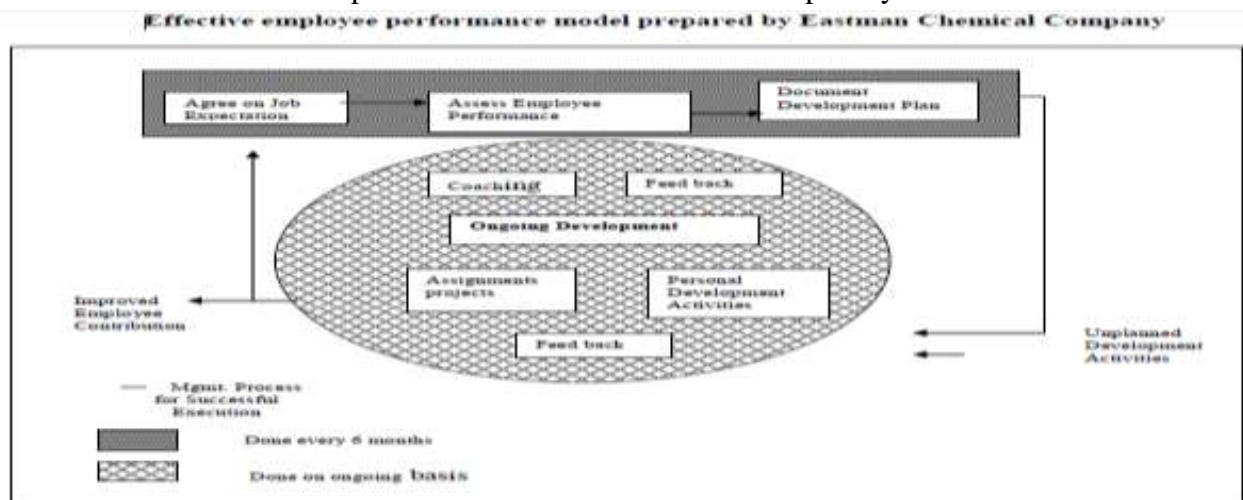
**A = Alignment:** Alignment and cohesion can only be archived if they are aware of the work that they need to do. The employees should have a clear idea about the goals and objectives of the organization, nature of work, stakeholders target market, demand and needs, and well-defined SOPs

**A = Authority:** Authority and autonomy be given to the employees to meet the quality of the work. All communication gaps must be avoided between employees and the employer. Employees must be aware of the important aspects, news and decisions of the organization.

**C = Capability:** A training program should be organized to enhance the potentials and capabilities of the employees.

**C = Commitment:** Employee commitment and retention are important to bring regularity and uniformity within an organization. Organizations must implement rewards and recognition programs to identify and reward the performing employees.

In the professional world, it is said that happy employees will make your customers happy and this statement has been proven several times within the hospitality environment.



**Source:** Van Devender, T. (2001)

The above diagram is the model of employee performance and how an employee's performance can be judged and managed.

With the above-said processes, an organization can attain the desired objectives and goals with the help of the employees, however, it is important for the employees to understand that they play a very important role in the progress of the organization and that they should take full responsibility of theirs. Food quality management is not just the responsibility of the management but employees also play a pivotal role in its management and maintenance. Some of the important aspects or one must the integral aspects of the employee's job working with food have been mentioned and discussed below:

### **Work Neatly**

The condition of the workplace directly reflects upon the attitude and the zeal of the employees and the management. The first impression of the customer when they enter and food outlet is the level of cleaning and how the outlet has been maintained. Neatness does not refer only to the cleanliness of the outlet or the kitchen but also to how the movable and non-movable assets have been maintained in the food outlet. Blend clean not only makes you look good and professional but also saves time and trouble. In a neat kitchen or food outlet, it will be easy for an individual to look out for tools and the equipment required. A dirty work area can also lead to accidents hence directly affecting the quality of food to be served to the customers. For us to attain the desired characteristics of the products it is important that work

in a clean and organized fashion. Food quality management does not include the areas where the food is being cooked or is served but also the implementation of HACCP principles to avoid food contamination from the point the food is received to the point the food is served.

**Receiving, storing, and stock rotation:** The job of the management is to make sure that the employees have been given the necessary SOPs for performing the task. One can very conscience say that the concept of food quality management is redundant until and unless proper SOPs are not put in place by the management or the competent authority. Receiving and storing play a very important and a never be ignored part in the quality of food that is served to the customers. It is very important the purchase standards are laid down by the management and ingredients whether perishable or nonperishable and received as per the desired and articulated standards, the employees should make sure that these standards are followed and a special checklist is filled s that the standards can be maintained. The goods received should be received at the proper temperature for perishables and proper packing and labeling for all goods.

The role of the employees does not end here they have to ensure that the principles of FIFO and LIFO are followed when using ingredients in the kitchen or the bar area. The management should make sure that the employees are trained again and again about these aspects and they are adhered to. The rotation of stock is not just the responsibility of the staff working in the kitchen or the restaurant but also the responsibility of the store who issues the ingredients to the departments. It is of utmost importance that this aspect of food quality management should be an integral part of the performance appraisals of the employees.

#### **Handling Equipment & work safety**

It is the responsibility of the employer to provide tools and equipment to the employees so that they can do their job effectively. The tools and equipment do not come cheap and are expensive and cost a lot of money to the employer. Not handling or abusing the equipment used can be expensive for an employer and a result can directly affect the profits of an organization. The employees need to make sure that the equipment uses is maintained properly and used properly. In food quality management use of equipment might not play a very important role how is very important when it comes down to portion size or consistency in the cuts of meat. Not only handling but maintenance of equipment is also the responsibility of the employees. To attain the desired characteristics of the product and its quality use the correct equipment is very important to ensure consistency and standards.

Employees should be aware of the fact that if equipment and tools are not maintained properly they can lead to workplace injuries and can harm the employees as well. Creating a safe working environment is not just the responsibility of the employer but also the

#### **Time Management**

Coming on time is managing your time. Time management forms a part of the responsibility of the employee. A good part of the principle of food quality management is dependent on the time management skills of the employees. Time management cannot be restricted just to cooking and serving food to the guest but also be inculcated in the management of the whole operations. Employees have to understand that time food or ingredients received from the



store should be placed in the necessary areas within a time so that the quality of the product can be maintained.

Some tasks are important and come with a deadline that has to be performed in the stipulated time, hence employees should understand how to set priorities and how to work on these priorities. Serving the food on time to the customers is part of the job of the food and beverage staff hence restricting your thinking that you manage time based on servicing your guest in time is not right. In certain cases a delay of 10 to 15 min can adversely affect the national or consumable characteristics of a particular product, so time management is not just the responsibility of the employees working in the kitchen but also the responsibility of the employees working in the store or the receiving area.

So to manage the time well employees must:

- Set priorities
- Begin the job right away
- Keep working until the job is done
- Keep deadlines in mind and stick to them
- Use resources efficiently

### **Management Responsibility**

In any food and beverage organization whether big or small management has to focus majorly on three main components namely:

- Quality
- Customer focus
- Supporting quality policy

### **Commitment to Quality and its policies**

The success of any food operation whether big or small lies in the commitment of the management towards quality. The management's commitment to quality has a substantial impact on the attitude and productivity and dedication of the employees (Peters, 1994 and Kondo, 1997). In addition to this involving and empowering employees within the hotel or restaurant operation in quality, issues is always a good decision and ensure a good quality product or service. Lack of management commitment to quality and employee involvement represents one of the key reasons for restaurant business failure (Parsa et al., 2005).

In a study done by Reda Mohamed Abdelhafiz Gadelrab (2010) on food quality management, the author interviewed several representatives. In the interviews, almost all the individuals believed that the commitment to quality is the key to food quality management at the time of production of food. Comments of the result of the interview have been given below.

*“We focus on quality commitment because we need to be competitive, we need to get and achieve a consistency of the product we present; therefore, we stress on the standard to be more confident.”*

Well, our goal is to offer the best food and service within Cardiff, so it's a big point for the management to be committed to the quality of food. Management of food quality from a management perspective is not just restricted to food involvement of staff but also includes taking feedback from the stakeholders, and customers. The dependency on food quality management also depends on the selection of suppliers and the way the food is supplied to

the organization. Suppliers should be selected after due diligence and his history in terms of the products supplied by him. Taste panels or tasting sessions regularly by the management also helps to improve the quality and consistency of food and forms a perfect example of the involvement of staff and interdepartmental interactions. Not only should that regular meetings regarding the quality of food served to be held within the departments.

Hart and Casserly (1985) contended that reducing the cost of products while not working on the quality of the food products is not a wise way of increasing the revenue of the hotel. Management needs to understand that reducing the prices of the products while not working on the quality of food is not a solution to reduced profits. To increase the profits any organization would have to focus on the quality and improve the characteristics of their products. The food quality of the products can also be maintained by the standardization of recipes. Standard recipes play a very important role in the management of food quality, recipes that are standardized not only help in maintaining the quality of the products but also help in keeping the cost of production low. The SOPs designed by the organization are based on the policies laid down by the organizations. In this aspect, we can only say that the policies designed should be for benefit of all the stakeholders and the other end of the funnel should end on the customer. This implies that all policies that are designed by the management should be directly or indirectly focused on the customers and not just the management-centric. The policies should not interfere with the normal operations of the

Apart from the factors mentioned above, a structured organization is very important to maintain the quality characteristics of a particular product. An organization where the owner is involved in every day-to-day operations decision which is especially seen SMEs also affects the quality management or one must say the total quality management of the organization. The owners of the management need to structure the organization in such a way so that no lapse happens between the staff. The delegation of authority and assignment of responsibility between the staff should be to ignore issues of multiple reporting and overlaps. The owner of every organization whether big or small should keep a focus on training the employees and take regular feedback from the employees. The owners should get the SOPs designed which are specific to the department and outline the clear policies of the organization.

### **Focus on customers**

The success of any origination depends upon the level of satisfaction of its customers. Customer satisfaction is the key to the success of any origination. The management of an organization should make sure that SOPs and steps are taken to ensure customer service at the optimum level. Anticipating customer needs and expectations is the key to customer satisfaction. A customer who is spending in your outlet at the end of the day wishes to have food of utmost quality. Apart from the above two aspects, another aspect that is important in food quality management from the customer perspective is the consistency of food and that's where the importance of SOPs and standard recipes are important. After a service and to understand the quality of food collection of feedback from the customer is important so that necessary improvements and changes can be made in the procedures and policies that guide those procedures.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that both employee and management are responsible for strategizing, implementing and managing the Food Quality. The main aim of this research was to understand and link how both employees and management are interlinked to each other when we talk about quality and standards. The research done in this paper reflects on the various soft and hard factors that lead to managing the employees. The findings of this research suggest that employees should be given autonomy to work and at the same time the management should design write policies and SOPs. This research also outlines some of the very small yet important aspects of food quality management. It reflects and states that rather than micro managing the staff and the middle management the owners should focus on the aspects of food quality management and customer satisfaction. The research also depicts that food quality management is not dependent just on one factor but a number of factors. In the end the researcher would like to conclude by stating that food quality management or FQM is not a day's process. It starts from the management and ends at the lowest level of the organization hierarchy, however the implementation of this process requires a lot of understanding, patience and excellent coordination between the employees and the management.

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