

# Quality Management in Forensic Disciplines



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## Opinion

The security challenges that today's environment is facing on a daily basis are innumerable. In fact, these are setting new standards for objective evidence and appealing certain specific competencies that should be always based on quality management. With the technological advancements made in the past century, forensic disciplines and resources had made a quantum leap in providing and reporting results to various stakeholders and floors which were beneficial and significant to criminal justice systems and also to societies which forensic experts have to be ethically accountable in their end investigations. This brought certain specific opportunities for improvement in various areas. On top of the agenda, quality assurance and quality control in our lines of expertise. Two scenarios that one can write volumes about these significant and ethical matters. However, by opting for these measures one can entertain a quality management system reducing or eventually eradicate errors and misunderstandings. By initiating certain management tools such as six-sigma and Ishikawa diagrams, one would start building a total quality management approach for a sustainable forensic setting. It is high time for forensic departments and institutions to continue its development by achieving certifications from national accredited bodies pertaining to different and significant standards depending on their tests and analysis being done in their premises. This will create an accountable and ethical atmosphere which the main stakeholders will benefit from.

However, reaching and maintaining these standards requires certain amount of team effort, commencing with top executives to team players performing the end results. The heart of every process must be bounded with five main pillars, facilities, people, training, services, equipment and standard procedures. By clearly implement competences in these aspects, would be the right way to acquire certifications from the highly motivated auditors carrying out checks and balances. These main aspects should be built on various International Standards (ISO) to

reflect the needs and setting of creating the right mixture for carrying out various tests and methods in the area of forensics. People should always be set on top of the agenda. However, it is easier said than done by top executives and middle management individuals. Nevertheless seeing a holistic picture, people are the heart of every process, most often the make or break article and are the engine of putting forward the vision of the organisation. Investing in people resembles as giving back to society a valued mechanism.

People and training should be always balanced simultaneously and by doing such will envisage the importance of having competencies in delivering objective evidence backed by knowledge and expertise that can be motivated if right challenged in open courts and other platforms. At a glance opting for accreditation process is easily described as challenging and costly, however this only reflect the need of improvement in the environment, tests and competencies that are being carried out on daily basis. Having accredited departments and process under varies ISO's award numerous benefits such as:

- i. Provide higher management with a well-organized management process
- ii. Create specific descriptions of responsibilities in the laboratory
- iii. Correspond an encouraging message to staff and customers
- iv. Classify more resourceful and time-saving development
- v. Cover short comings
- vi. Reduce overheads
- vii. Provides permanent appraisal and development

With an added value of motivation and enhance forensic trust in societies and in the processes analysis being carried out.

The smart ambitions should always be related to quality. Given the magnitude of attaining the right level of quality, it is significant to measure quality aspects in various scenarios by adopting the correct approach. Internal audits are another aspect of maintaining and improving various vertical and horizontal processes. By conducting impartial audits from trained people one would quantify quality and giving the process a continuous development needed to highlight shortcomings and approaching sustained improvement. Quality will continue enhance the chain of evidence, a process in itself that it of utmost importance to every investigation. Quality in these aspects will strive for quality controls and assurances in abolish contamination which could is costly to every investigation. Having set descriptions and competences of people, the right setting will give the forensic expert and the department the lead for objective evidence in reporting and the confidence needed to present and discuss the objective evidence in open courts. This will also give the criminal justice system more reliable sources of information and also a right state of mind in prevailing justice. Upon this all the pertinent actors, stake holders and suspects in investigations

should favour such approaches and quality management systems should be the smart endeavour for reaching the next level of quality. Sometimes you can judge a book by its cover. Appearances can predicts behaviour in surprising ways-some of the time. Quoting an expression from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics "*we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit.*" The proposition of this is that it does not matter what we do on instances but *excellence have to be a habit in every test, analysis, and process we encounter with. After all we are here not to be easy on people but to make individuals better.*

The author of this article is a police inspector within the Malta Police Force. Currently he is in jointly in charge and heading the forensic science laboratory of the Malta Police Force with another police inspector, who's collectively are responsible to a team of more than fifty officers. He is a graduate in management and policing and he is the final stages of completing a master's degree compiling a dissertation on leading and improving a forensic laboratory ethically. Apart from being a document expert for the past years, he is also trained in various forensic disciplines, crime scene management and ISO.



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