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Article

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An excellent organization involves much more than the implementation and the certification of one or more models of management systems. It means developing techniques and tools of busin excellence which lead the organization to outstanding performance on quality, costs and deadlines in order to meet the expectations of all their stakeholders. Such an approach is needed especially in the context of an economy marked by globalization, extremely complex and dynamic that causes spectacular changes in the business environment by integrating quality management principles on purpose to develop sustainable excellence.

Not coincidentally, the new edition of the European excellence model EFQM integrates for the first time the principle "managing with agility" with the principles: "developing organizational capability", "harnessing creativity & innovation", "adding value to the customer", "sustaining outstanding results" for the organization and "creating a sustainable future". Also, the new model for quality management system defined by the edition from 2015 of ISO 9000 standards , promotes the process-based approach, incorporating the cycle "Plan - Do – Check – Act" (PDCA) and the risk-based thinking, focusing on organizational change and innovation, in order to ensure a sustainable performance in business. Noteworthy is the endeavor for the development of a high-level structure for all international standards for management systems, aiming to harmonize these standards to facilitate the implementation of integrated management systems (quality – environment – security – social responsibility).

In these circumstances, the importance of organizational agility development and of the capability to control the inherent processes in relation to all stakeholders is extensively acknowledged, taking into account the principles of quality management and business excellence, in connection with developing the capacity for innovation so as to minimize the growing risks in business development and sustainability.

By taking into consideration these evolutions, the articles comprised in the current issue of the journal bring to the fore a myriad of aspect referring to the quality management and to its more refined version, that is, Total Quality Management (TQM) and business excellence which stands for better quality of products and services, competitive costs and satisfied clients. The prizes for quality/excellence established at the national and international levels offer relevant criteria according to which companies are able to assess to what extent they conform to the standards for implementing TQM and for achieving business excellence. In this vein, the articles "*MBNQA approach in quality management supporting sustainable business performance in agribusiness*" and "*Correlations within the EFQM business excellence model by applying a factor analysis*" draw upon the two most important prizes in the field, namely the American one - Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the European one - European Foundation of Quality Management. The objectives of the paper "*Assessment of the State of Implementation of Excellence Model Common Assessment*

Framework (CAF) 2013 by the National Institutes of Research – Development – Innovation in Romania” concern with the evaluation of the current state of implementation of the Excellence Model Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 2013 (a developed instrument of total quality management, inspired by the excellence model of the European Foundation of Quality Management - EFQM) by the National Institutes of Research – Development – Innovation in Romania, as well as the determination of the implementation impact of one or multiple management systems on achieving excellence in research – innovation activities. In the same context, the article *“The three-dimensional approach of total quality management, an essential strategic option for business excellence”* advances a three-dimensional perspective on total quality management, providing several specific actions by means of which Romanian organizations - implementing total or partial integrated systems of quality management - are able to engender significant competitive advantages. Similarly, the article *“Towards sustainability: effective operations strategies, quality management and operational excellence in banking”* intends to go deeper into the understanding of the ways to economic durability by means of efficient operations strategies, of quality management and operational excellence in the banking sector. In this study, new practices of quality management are depicted, all of them having a high influential potential on excellence in banking affairs.

The growing competition on the market, the higher exigencies of the customers and globalization push service suppliers towards increasing the quality of their outputs. At present, it falls short for a supplier to provide an adequate quality, it is more important to gratify the customer by offering him more than he would expect. Moreover, well-known research companies forecast that customer satisfaction will become the main competitive edge in the next few years. In this framework, the paper *“Study and development of quality measurements models for steering business services in relation to customer satisfaction”* elaborates on the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, highlights the most influential factors of the customer satisfaction and, in the end, accounts for the new six-step model which was developed to establish an efficient method for measuring service quality. The article *“Measuring quality in automobile aftersales: AutoSERVQUAL scale”* underscores the growing importance of the precise measurement of the quality level in the services field, especially in the automobile aftersales services. This study, based on experts’ opinions and statistical analyses, aims at developing a questionnaire for the measurement of automobile aftersales services, called AutoSERVQUAL, comprising a 28-item scale considered to support a proper appraisal of the service quality of the highly-reliable automobile. The instrument may be extended to cover the aftersales services in general, for any type of products. In its turn, the paper *“Total quality management implementation and guest satisfaction in hospitality”* is focused on measuring the customer/guest expectation and satisfaction regarding the quality of the hospitality product, by investigating several cases and finally positing that the main difference in customer satisfaction towards service quality in the studied hotels is correlated with the personnel and cost efficiency.

The group of quality management standards (ISO 9000), as well as the ones referring to food safety (ISO 22000), environment (ISO 14001), information security (ISO 27001) and occupational safety (OHSAS 18001) reflect an international consensus on the mandatory managerial best practices able to ensure the organizational capability to satisfy – timely and consistently – the customer’s demands towards product and service quality, along with the regulatory exigencies of increasing customer satisfaction and of continuously enhancing self-performance. In this respect, two articles are of the essence. *“A cross-country*

empirical study towards the impact of following ISO management system standards on euro-area economic confidence” aims to examine the impact of the adoption of international ISO management system standards on the economic sentiment indicator (ESI) comprising the organizations’ standpoints on the euro-area economy. In the empirical research, there were included ISO quality management system standards (ISO 9001, ISO 13485, ISO 16949), food safety (ISO 22000), environment (ISO 14001), information security (ISO 27001). Additionally, the article “*Exploring the impact of ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 certification on financial performance: the case of companies listed on the Bucharest stock exchange*” discusses the impact of standards certification on financial performance in the case of Romanian companies listed on the Bucharest stock exchange.

The aspects related to quality, costs of poor quality and to the factors which influence quality are essential for preserving competitiveness in business activities. The usage of software applications and simulations facilitate a more efficient quality management. The simulation instruments provide the inclusion of multiple variables in experimental designs and the assessment of their aggregate impact on the final outcome. The article “*Cost analysis of poor quality using a software simulation*” introduces a case study referring to the usage of Monte Carlo simulations in the quality management field.

In the contemporary period, fraud is often committed by means of computers and it may be discovered by a forensic examiner acting in the digital environment. As a consequence, with a view to enhance business excellence, all the organizations, irrespective of their size (small, medium or large) should address the risk of fraud. In the *paper “Achieving business excellence by optimizing corporate forensic readiness”*, an optimal model of investigating computer incidents in the corporate field is advanced, the result of the proposed model entailing the dramatic reduction of the organization’s potential losses in the future and the improvement of the business quality.

The paper “*Quality management in project management consulting. A case study in an international consulting company*” addresses quality management from the specific perspective of organizations providing consulting services for large infrastructure project management. The article analyzes the case of a project management consulting firm which is focused on achieving different goals in large infrastructure projects in Romania, Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia. The results of the study empirically underline the main success factors for project management consulting services and are credited to be useful for improving the firm and project performance, contributing to the attainment of business excellence.

In the current economic framework, challenged by globalization, it is highly acknowledged that each business process contributes to the accomplishment of organizational objectives and influences its ability to ensure a high level of customer and stakeholder satisfaction. This is why, over the past years, the emphasis is laid on the integration of quality management in business analyses.

**Editor in Chief,
Vasile Dinu**