

# Achieving excellence with structured networking: A Canadian Case Study

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The Quebec Society for Quality (MQQ<sup>1</sup>) has found an original way to help Canadian organizations. A system of 22 Performance Networks was created for organizational leaders and quality continuous improvement managers. These networks are grouped by field of market expertise needed (for example, in public sector, services, manufacturing sector etc.) and their geographic localization. The central objectives were to use the best business practices, provide tips on continuous improvement, problem-solving techniques and find out difficulties experienced and any other topic related to quality chosen by participants. The aim was for the team network members to visit an organization in order to observe the practices and give them the feedback to the host organizations in return.

Performance networks members unquestionably became recognized and accepted by the close ties that they developed with members of their client organizations. The true became obvious when organizational leaders were seen unhesitant and totally free to talk openly about their problems and weaknesses identified in their own organization. They began sharing their improvement action plans implemented on the basis of good shots, and even those from bad shots, made by their peers.

The added value of these networks lies in that these are now permanent initiatives. This goes further than just participation like in a presentation or a conference where the individuals return to their companies with lots of relevant information, but without the possibility to share the problems experienced in actual workplaces and in everyday life.

Each network has its expert facilitator in quality and continuous improvement that initiate discussions and provide rich content to respective member organizations. Routinely, four to six meetings held annually is determined and selected by the Network members. The subjects or discussion topics eventually get diversified and at times as needed by clients and may vary from special topics from a manager's training program to risk analysis, quality controls or kaizen experiments. A code of ethics is signed by members to promote the sharing of knowledge and know-how and to strengthen mutual trust and for the very nature of confidentiality in building long term client relationship. Finally, the benefits are documented on yearly basis. The bottom line of this unique initiative is that since 2006, hundreds of good practices were implemented in many different sizes and types of organizations and the networks' participation is increasing every year.

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<sup>1</sup> MQQ = Mouvement québécois de la qualité = *Quebec Society for Quality*