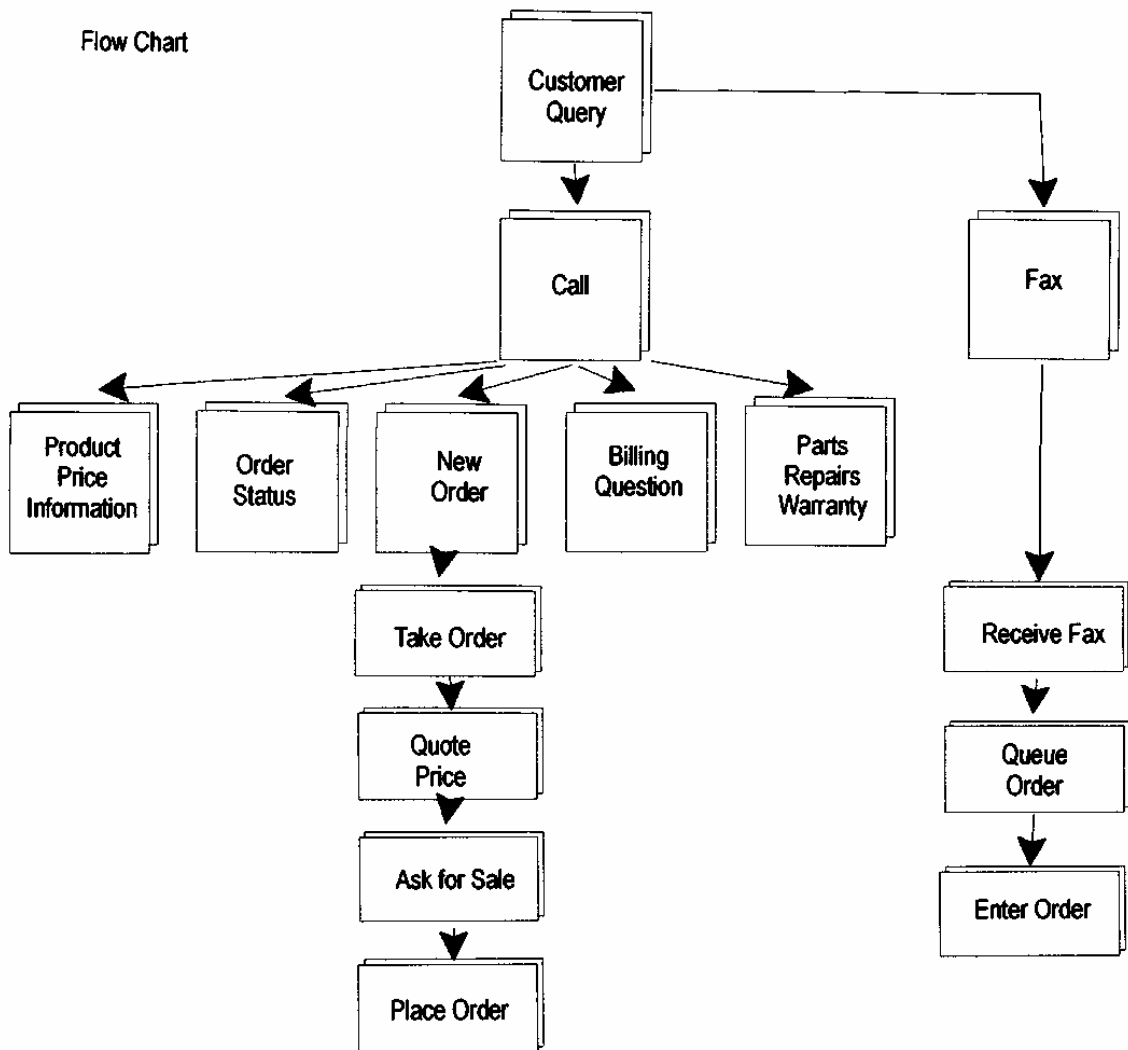


Lesson Three: FOCUS - Clarify Current Knowledge of the Process

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A. Process Definition – How does this process actually work? Who does what? How do they do it? (use Flow Chart)

The team prepared the flow chart below which describes the existing process/flow of customer calls and faxes. Calls are distributed to service representatives randomly. All representatives are responsible for handling all types of calls. Fax orders are distributed evenly among all of the service representatives. Fax orders are entered during slow/slack periods of call volume.



B. Process Analysis

After mapping the existing call flow/process, the FOCUS team analyzed the process with emphasis on variation, obstacles, and choke points.

- What are the most significant differences or inconsistencies in the way we work this process?

There is no consistent method for handling any of the customer service sub-processes – pricing, new orders, order entry, billing questions, parts/warranty/repairs. Each representative handles each call differently depending on their own skills, experience, and interest.

There is no consistent method for entering fax orders. Representatives do their best to enter orders at slack times when they are not handling calls.

Some reps call customers to verify and confirm the fax orders. Other reps enter the order directly based on their best interpretation of the faxed information which is often incomplete or illegible.

- What are the most significant obstacles, gaps, constraints, and/or choke points in this process?

Calls are routed randomly at times to reps who are untrained/unable to answer the customers question

Service reps enter orders without referring to actual product availability

Pricing schedules are often inaccurate/conflicting – price lists do not agree with special/custom quotes prepared by sales force

There is no dedicated process for handling fax orders – reps need to steal time from handling calls to enter faxes, as a result there is a daily backlog of unentered fax orders

Customers send inaccurate, illegible faxes

2. Additional Resources and Links to Others Sources

Richard Chang and Mathew Niedzwiecki, *Continuous Improvement Tools, Volumes 1 & 2*. (Richard Chang Associates)

Dianne Galloway, *Mapping Work Processes*. (ASQ Quality Press)

GOAL/QPC, *The Memory Jogger II: A Pocket Guide of Tools for Continuous Improvement and Effective Planning*. (Telephone 1.800.643.4316)

GOAL/QPC, *Problem Solving Machine for the Memory Jogger II*. (Telephone 1.800.643.4316)

Peter Mears, *Quality Improvement Tools & Techniques*. (McGraw-Hill)

3. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

How does variation in design and management of a process contribute to variation in product or service quality? Give an example.