In Pursuit of Excellence... PRI Activities

Key PRI staff explain what they have done to continually exceed customer expectations in pursuit of excellence.

Joe Pinto, Vice President & Chief Operating Officer

Throughout my career I have always worked hard to exceed expectations. I even came out of retirement to work at PRI! To me, PRI’s commitment to excellence in customer service is shown by the positive attitude and collaborative approach of all PRI staff towards our customers, whatever the activity. Ultimately, any business is all about the customer and needs to remember that to be truly excellent.

With the customer in mind, one of the things I have recently supported and encouraged is an open discussion on contract flowdown between aerospace prime contractors, suppliers, Nadcap auditors and PRI staff. Contract flowdown is acknowledged to be an area where there is opportunity for improvement so I look forward to seeing how PRI can facilitate progress. Of course, this is just one example and PRI has to look internally for improvement opportunities as well. To that effect, PRI issued a customer satisfaction survey recently and the results are currently being analyzed.

Seema Martin, Director of PRI Europe, Marketing & Business Development

I have always found that, in order to feel as if you are doing an excellent job, you need to feel a little uncomfortable and realize that learning will come with frustration, struggle, setbacks and failures. I believe that it is how you handle these obstacles that defines a winning organization. If you want to be excellent at something, it’s going to involve relentlessly pushing past your comfort zone.

One of the key aspects of our internal momentum is the PRI staff’s passion for excellence. Passion fuels focus, resilience, and perseverance. In my mind, these, coupled with listening to the customer, can be the root to a continued focus on excellence. In the pursuit of excellence does mean acting upon the needs of your customers but also anticipating them.

For example, I recognized when I first started at PRI that our international customers find it value-added that PRI thinks globally but acts locally. As a result, I have made it a goal to recruit multi-lingual staff to the PRI Europe office wherever possible. To date, we have staff who speak Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish - we are still working on our American English!

In another value-added effort to better serve our customers, PRI began offering training classes free of charge to delegates at the Nadcap meetings in 2011. Topics ranged from Introduction to Pyrometry to How to Prepare for a Nadcap Audit. We will continue this initiative into 2012.

Jerry Aston, Lead Senior Staff Engineer - Heat Treating

As an industry-managed program, Nadcap is fundamentally customer-oriented, with input from throughout the supply chain valued at every level, from the Board of Directors to the Task Groups.

To ensure that the voice of the customer remains integral to everything we do, the Heat Treating Task Group has devised its own post-audit survey for Nadcap suppliers. Consisting of questions related specifically to the content and
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process of the Nadcap heat treating audit, this feedback gives us an invaluable opportunity to continually improve our customer service.

In addition, a customer survey earlier this year that focused on the value that Nadcap heat treating accreditation delivers showed that 80% were satisfied with the Heat Treating Task Group’s actions to improve the Nadcap audit process. Although this is good news, in the spirit of pursuing excellence, the Heat Treating Task Group will continue to improve its customer service and consistency of service delivery to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Mark Aubele, Senior Program Manager - NDT, Electronics & Aerospace Quality Systems

As an aerospace engineer by education, and having worked in aerospace throughout my career, I have found that - in order to pursue excellence - you have to be organized and methodical in your approach. It is impossible to be excellent without good people and an infrastructure around you.

That infrastructure is not only a vital tool for staff to know what is expected of them; it also provides a compass for our customers, giving them information about our commitment to them. Nadcap is governed by a series of procedures, which detail how the program should operate, how industry representatives in leadership positions should conduct themselves, and what staff responsibilities are. This provides a transparent, robust and rigorous format that eliminates the opportunity for confusion or misinterpretation; at least, as far as possible when human beings are concerned!

My recommendation for anyone in a highly regulated industry looking to pursue excellence is to ensure that you establish systems, policies and procedures that clearly identify what needs to happen, how often and by whom and to make these available to your customers if they are impacted by your set-up. After that, it’s a case of ensuring open communication throughout the organization, establishing a system of checks and balances (such as internal audits) and having the right people doing the work. Sounds so easy, doesn’t it...

Scott Klavon, Director of Nadcap and Aerospace Operations

In the pursuit of excellence, no matter what the endeavor, the key is preparation. In preparing for a Nadcap audit, conduct the pre-audit of your facility and process with complete honesty.

Ask every question on the checklist and record where you found the answers. If the answer to a question is ‘no’, treat that as an opportunity for improvement.

We understand that this can be a long and time-consuming process. To help make this easier, the NDT team at PRI enhanced the audit checklist by adding compliance guidelines after each question to explain the intent of the question.

Previously, these explanations were detailed in a separate document – the audit handbook. By combining this with the audit checklist, suppliers now only have one file to download and refer to instead of two, making conducting the pre-audit process easier and quicker.