

Quality management retains customers

By Kutloano Leshomo (Botswana National Productivity Centre)

Leon M Cautillo says 'the bitterness of poor quality remains long after low pricing is forgotten', and organisations which recognise how important customers are would definitely agree. Quality has to be the order of the day for organisations that want to retain their customers and survive in today's competitive market. It is for this reason that assisting organisations to have good quality management systems is a strength of the Botswana National Productivity Centre.

The RIIC

The RIIC is a technology development and dissemination centre. It carries out research and development programmes in many fields including renewable energy, with emphasis on solar, wind energy, and biogas systems, as well as water pumping and agricultural technologies ranging from sorghum threshers, ploughs and peanut shellers, and building technologies, which include tile-making machines. It has developed a fully-fledged testing and quality control function through which all products are thoroughly tested before they are released into the market.

Journey to quality

The journey towards ISO 9001 certification at the RIIC started in 1996 when the parent company Rural Industries Promotions Company Botswana, decided to establish a quality management system at the RIIC, one of its subsidiaries. The process started with training of staff in the ISO 9000 clauses; documenting quality systems; internal quality auditing.

Some of the key personnel were sent to the Botswana National Productivity Centre

for training in these areas, while Ford Quality Systems from South Africa trained the rest of the staff at the RIIC. The entire documentation was completed in August 1998, and implementation started immediately. Internal audits of the system were conducted to ensure that it was being correctly implemented, and where inadequacies were found the company corrected them.

The Botswana National Productivity Centre carried out a pre-assessment audit on the system in November 1998. To make the initiative holistic, the Botswana National Productivity Centre started a production improvement project at the workshop in the RIIC.

The objective was to improve the workshop area and also to pass on the skills of solving problems systematically to the RIIC workshop team, so that they could later transfer these skills to the rest of the organisation. After two rounds of pre-assessment, and one round of assessment, corrections were made.

In April 2000 the South African Bureau of Standards made a recommendation to award the ISO 9001 certificate.

Real test to begin

But even though the RIIC has the certificate and the ISO flag has been hoisted, the real test is yet to begin. A lot has to be done in the maintenance of the system in order to ensure that the RIIC retains the certificate. The company will go through six monthly audits by the South African Bureau of Standards. The first audit is already scheduled for November 2000.

Creating a buzz about productivity

By Anton Fisher

An animal character that is set to grab the attention of all South Africans was unveiled by the National Productivity Institute (NPI) at the launch of National Productivity Week.

Bizzi the bee is intended to become the NPI vehicle for communicating on productivity with all sectors of South African society in an effort to ensure the development of the country's productive capacity.

Productivity Week will run until Friday 6 October under the theme 'Building a nation at work'.

As part of Productivity Week the deputy director-general of the National Productivity Council of India, Mr Krishnan Kittappa, will present two seminars – in Cape and Durban – on the topic SMME development strategies and future challenges.

According to the executive of the NPI, Dr Yvonne Diadla, the character was developed following an opinion survey conducted last year.

'The NPI is determined to make Bizzi the bee a household name and an instantly recognisable carrier of our productivity message. This character must create a buzz about the role that each one of us can play in contributing to economic development,' Dr Diadla said.

The opinion survey found that the overwhelming majority of respondents from

labour, business and government supported the ideal of improving productivity, though the benefits of such improved productivity should be shared equitably among all stakeholders.

However, many respondents believed that the productivity message was not being communicated effectively.

Dr Diadla said: 'Bizzi the bee is an attempt to find a creative response to the survey. The NPI therefore calls on our major social partners – labour, business and government – to support Bizzi and to make the character visible in our offices, factories, schools, shops, SMMEs, in urban

and rural areas, as well as educational and training institutions.'

She said the bee was

universally regarded as

an industrious animal that works smart and produces honey, which has value in creating a healthy nation, creating wealth and beauty.

The NPI has developed a set of five basic messages that will be communicated to the country by Bizzi during Productivity Week:

- ☐ Get it right the first time
- ☐ Share the benefits
- ☐ People are our greatest resource
- ☐ Make every minute count
- ☐ Your idea is important

Posters of Bizzi the bee will be available from the NPI. Contact Mr Anton Fisher at telephone (012) 341-1470.

When everything is in place, the programme will be extended to other subsidiaries of Rural Industries Promotions Company Botswana.

