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*A thought for today: Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.  
-- an old Chinese proverb*

## The Continuing Election

Every dollar you spend is a vote in favor of something. The only thing we spend more on than food is government. This means that there is a continuing multibillion dollar election going on in the supermarkets and restaurants of this country. The foods that are winning this election are those that most nearly meet the wants and wishes of the voting public – those with money to spend.

Success requires learning the wants and wishes of the customer. **Whatever they want is, by definition, quality.** A second requirement of success is that the entire company be customer oriented. For example:

## Spaghetti

Most people like their spaghetti tender but firm. Not hard or pasty. And with a wheat-like odor and a light golden color. The spaghetti should not stick together and when cooking, only a very small amount should dissolve in the cooking water. Now that's quality! But how do you get this message across to everyone in the plant and even to suppliers?

## Translate customer wants into product specifications.

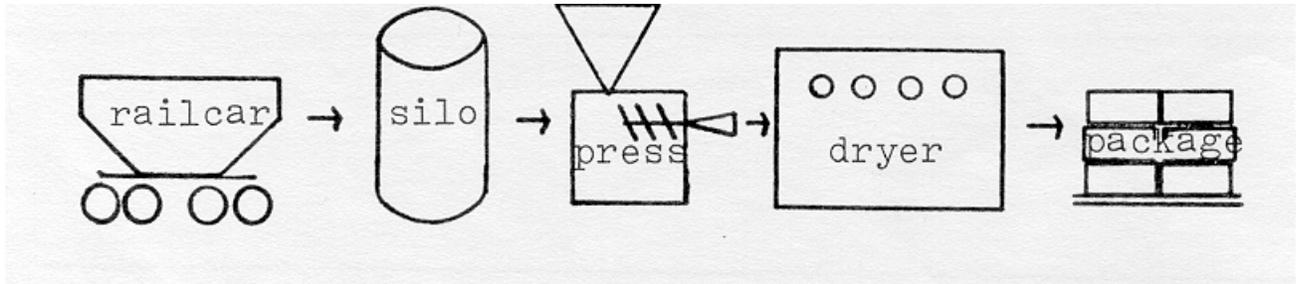
<u>Want</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Specification</u>
Nice bite	Tender	No core after cooking
Nice bite	Not sticky	5% max. cooking loss
Looks good	Golden color	2.0 ppm carotene

And so forth. The result is a customer oriented **product specification.**

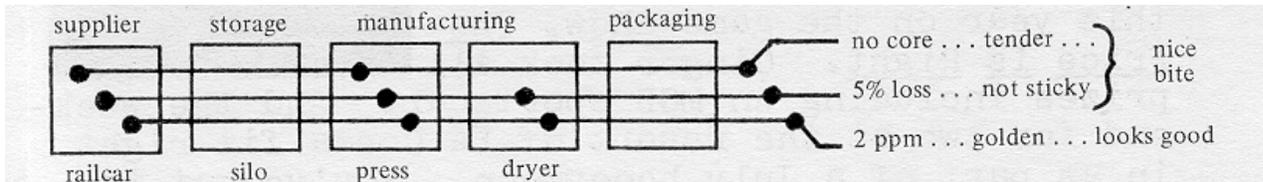
The logical approach is for Marketing to set the objectives and then work with Production and Quality Control to develop product specifications that agree with the objectives.

Study the company or **system** that has to produce the product. Spaghetti is often made from a coarse ground durum wheat called, semolina. This arrives at the plant in a railroad car and is blown into a storage silo before manufacture into spaghetti, macaroni or noodles. The semolina is mixed with water in a continuous screw press and extruded as long strands of wet spaghetti. These are hung over rods and carefully dried before

cutting to proper length for packaging and distribution. What does all this have to do with the “nice bite” of the spaghetti on your plate?



Look at your system diagram and for each box, ask the question: Is anything likely to happen here that would bother my customer? In other words, cause my product to be outside specifications? If the answer is, “Yes,” then that is a **critical control point** (●).



For example, the continuous screw press has a vacuum maintained on the hopper that feeds the semolina dough into it. If the vacuum drops (watch that gauge!), air will be pressed into the spaghetti. This will pock the surface of the spaghetti strands while drying and destroy the nice golden color. Since the surface will not be smooth and hard, there will be more tendency for the spaghetti to mush up while cooking, be sticky and not have a good bite. Watch that gauge!

For each critical control point there must be a specification. (do not allow the vacuum to fall below 20 lbs.) When developed in this way, each specification relates directly to the customer. And by proper communication, each person’s work relates directly to the customer. The network of ingredient, processing and product specifications provides the foundation for managing a product by objective.

### The Missing Link

It has been noted that the skills required for a successful election campaign may not be the same needed for delivering on campaign promises. But the successful president (of a country or company) hires both skills and then **links** the promises (marketing) with the administration (production). Customer oriented specifications (the platform) is the key to that link.