

## The PICOS Process for Rapid Improvement

by Ann L. Wiley

When our April speaker, Alan Pedersen, reported using the PICOS process to achieve remarkable improvements quickly at the Cayuga Medical Center, some of us asked about the process, including how to spell it! A search of *Google* shows the process has been used extensively in health care organizations. In fact, the first two hits are for Rochester General and Strong hospitals.

Rochester General Hospital reports (in an undated web page in the *Google* cache) that in the late 1980s General Motors instituted PICOS (meaning "peaks of mountains" in Spanish), an intensive process to improve quality, service and efficiency. When General Motors realized that the company spent more on employee healthcare benefits than on steel, a program was instituted to make GM quality and efficiency improvements available to healthcare providers.

There is also a General Motors PICOS process in supply chain management. This seems to be entirely different and is called Purchased Input Concept Optimization with Suppliers (April, 2000 report of unknown origin on global supply chain management in the *Google* cache).

The Cardio-Thoracic Surgery Team at Rochester General began using PICOS in 1997, by charting the entire process patients undergo during their stay, from preadmission to discharge. The team drew diagrams to trace the footsteps of everyone involved in caring for the patients. This revealed the extent of wasted effort in surgical processes. A single, fully self-contained heart surgery unit where patients would receive all of their care was envisioned based on the PICOS project. Implementation began within the confines of existing space. Equipment is brought to the patient, rather than moving the patient through the building. Centralization can reduce use of floor space by 20%, shorten patient stays by almost one-fourth, improve the therapeutic environment, and reduce the cost of care.

Strong Hospital further explains the PICOS process (*URMFG News*, August, 1998). A cross-functional team rapidly redesigns a process to eliminate waste. During a 3½ day workshop, the team identifies waste and participates in "field studies." In one, the team walks the process to determine where the waste is and later applies quality tools to streamline the process. The team continues by developing an improved process and a 12-month implementation plan. The workshop ends with a presentation to management and designation of a champion to lead implementation.

PICOS has helped health care organizations achieve improvements and overcome resistance arising from long-term improvement projects that consume much effort but yield few tangible clinical process improvements. The emphasis of PICOS is on using available data for small samples sizes, and on successive small, short-term improvements.

## Next dinner meeting

May 22, 2003

### Integration of Lean and Six Sigma

Donald D. Baker and Vincenzo Buonomo, RIT

**Details:** See page 4 and the flyer on [www.asqrs.org](http://www.asqrs.org).

**Reservations:** Call 585-234-8630 by noon May 21. Walk-ins are welcome.

## Volunteer opportunities

To **volunteer to serve on a committee**, contact Volunteer chair Kathy Bannon, 585-453-4629, [kbannon2@ocdus.jnj.com](mailto:kbannon2@ocdus.jnj.com).

The Communications Committee seeks a volunteer to handle publicity and public relations. This includes working with committee chairs on publicity and expanding our public relations effort. Contact Kathy Bannon, 585-453-4629, [kbannon2@ocdus.jnj.com](mailto:kbannon2@ocdus.jnj.com).

## Learning and networking opportunities

Events in Rochester and outside the area are listed on the Special Events page of our web site, [www.asqrs.org](http://www.asqrs.org). Follow the link at the bottom of the home page.

## Thank you

To **Ivan Enstrom** and **Mary Tyler** for working with ASQ to revise our bylaws and to all the members who voted in the referendum on whether to approve the changes.

To **Dave Schreiber** for arranging our successful seminar on GD&T and to the instructor **Don Day**.

# Quality Audit

American Society for Quality Rochester  
Section newsletter

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Send submissions to the editor,  
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information for all section leaders is on the  
section web site, [www.asqrs.org](http://www.asqrs.org).

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## Letters from members

*The truth comes out, by Chuck Hardy*

Now we have to face the truth. For years we have been so busy, we never had time to ask the hard questions. Business was booming; budget increases were approved with little resistance. If a job wasn't getting done, you could hire more people. It all seems so distant now. The markets plummeted, you've had to lay off half your workforce, and that quality system you thought was so good, is now yielding more customer complaints than you can handle. The workplace is getting hostile as people are making less and less money and being asked to do more and more with less.

Bad processes can't survive in this market. Poor performers stand out. Every job is looked at under a microscope and there is no room for error. The truth comes out.

It's time to take action!. Now is the best time to clean up your processes and get your system in order. Catch up on your ISO audits. Finish that procedure you have been meaning to update. Take time to meet with your customers. Fine-tune your skills. Volunteer for an organization you trust.

While the temptation may be there to slack off in this slow time, I would recommend the opposite. Now is the time for action. That way, when this slowdown is over, you will be ready to go, with confidence.

## Message from the chair

*by BJ Coons*

Since last month much has happened. The section obtained enough votes to pass our new by-laws and we had a terrific conference! The war has progressed quickly and hopes are high that the end of all hostilities is near. We had a horrendous ice storm, which affected all of us in some way; many were either without power or host to others without power. And more of our colleagues lost their jobs.

This past month has been a month of reflection for me. As I celebrated my 50th birthday I realized the many accomplishments in my lifetime. Married for 31 years, I raised two children while working full time and going to college at night. I have changed careers three times and now have a job that I love. Oddly when I look back I recognize that this was not by design or planning, but by chance and opportunity. Don't get me wrong—it took some hard work to get here, but I was always fortunate enough to see that there was another direction to take.

Over the years I have known many people who have left or lost their jobs and ended up in totally different fields. Two friends went back to school to become teachers after being "downsized." One friend released from Kodak after 25 years became a nurse; he loves his job.

We have been told that our children may have to change careers as many as five times in their lifetimes, and we all know that baby boomers do not like change! However, we may need to see change as a catalyst to gain the personal satisfaction obtained from following our forgotten dreams in a new career.

## Message from the editor

*by Ann L. Wiley*

Please send letters and feature articles at any time to [ann@annl Wiley.com](mailto:ann@annl Wiley.com).

## Dinner meeting report

At the April 23 meeting, 30 people heard Alan Pedersen describe the work of Cayuga Medical Center in Ithaca to improve the wide range of services offered by the center. The PICOS process has been used, as reported on the front page.

Dr. Rita Ratcliffe led the **Health Care Task Group** in a review of work to date on our pro-bono project with a local Family Practice office to improve patient flow and decrease wait times for patients in the office.

## Executive Committee report

The Executive Committee met on April 22. The section scholarships were awarded at the Quality Conference and the recipients are very appreciative. The conference tracks and the opening, keynote, and closing speakers received favorable comments in the survey. Vince Vezza will research our investments and report to the Executive Committee. All members are welcome to attend Executive Committee meetings. Please contact the Chair, BJ Coons, [BJ53@rochester.rr.com](mailto:BJ53@rochester.rr.com).

## Quality Conference wins high praise

Our **Region 2 Director Dan Sniezek** attended the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Quality Conference on March 26. Afterwards Dan wrote to the Chair. Dan's comments include high praise for the Conference, the volunteers, and our section. His comments follow.

Thanks for your hospitality and your great conference. I found most interesting the topics of "change." I had some difficult decisions because you had so much at the conference, especially in the areas of Lean and Six Sigma.

I had a great time at the "mixer" the night before, getting to talk with the presenters and many of the volunteers who, as you know, really put on the show. Without them where would we be? They did a great job.

I really meant what I said at the conference about beans. The saying goes (slightly changed): If you feed a person beans, you feed them today. If you teach them how to grow beans you feed them for a lifetime. We at the conference learned about "growing beans," as well as the use of quality tools and implementing them.

When we learn and implement quality principles businesses grow, and grow, and grow. When businesses grow there are more jobs, and more jobs, and more jobs. With jobs people are more satisfied and happier, and happier, and happier. Happier people make this world a safer and better place to live and we all win.

Thanks for making the world a better place! You and your team are just great! Keep up the good work.

## Membership report

*by Bob Stein, Membership chair*

Currently the Rochester section has 827 members. Please welcome our new members, who joined in March.

Nalin K. Chaudhry  
Nicholas G. Hardie  
John W. Himes  
Mark A. Johnson  
Jay A. Jones  
Michaline O'Neill  
Brian J. Pierce  
Jerry T. Runser  
Robert G. Watt

## Vote on the bylaws

We have obtained a vote on the revised bylaws by more than the required one quarter of the members, and approval was nearly unanimous. Our proposed new bylaws are on the May agenda of the ASQR Board of Directors and approval is expected. The new bylaws will be posted on our web site.

## Are you receiving ASQRS email announcements?

The Rochester Section sends email reminders at least once a month to members who have subscribed to the section's email announcement list. To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit [www.asqrs.org/maillinglist.htm](http://www.asqrs.org/maillinglist.htm).

**If you have subscribed, but have not been receiving messages**, your company may not be allowing the messages to be delivered. You may want to change your email address and receive the reminders at home. Please visit the mailing list page and send a message to the webmaster with the email address change.



Rochester Section 0204

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## May Dinner Meeting: Thursday, May 22, 2003 *The Integration of Lean and Six Sigma*

Donald D. Baker, John D. Hromi Center for Quality and Applied Statistics, RIT  
and Vincenzo Buonomo, CELE, RIT

### **The Integration of Lean and Six Sigma**

How can companies make everything right the first time while at the same time make everything as fast as they can to meet customer demand?

The answer is by integrating Six Sigma and lean manufacturing techniques. The ability to bring these two together into a powerful continuous improvement methodology provides enormous leverage to any business.

In isolation these methods are useful; together they will take your business to new levels of sustained competitiveness.

The program will be held at Wishing Well Restaurant (1190 Chili Avenue, 390 to Chile Avenue Exit).

The **Software Task Group** meets at 5:00 PM.

**Registration** starts at 5:30 PM. The buffet **dinner** is at 6:00 PM and the **program** starts at 7:00 PM.

To **register**, call 234-8630 by noon on Wednesday, May 21, 2003.

The **cost** is \$15.00 (\$5.00 for student members). Payment is by cash, check or credit card. There is no charge to attend the program only. Walk-ins and guests are welcome.

### **Software Task Group News**

On May 16 at 1:00 PM, the RIT Golisano College of Computing and Information Science Dean's Lecture Series will feature Watts Humphrey, known for his work on the Capability Maturity Model. For details, including registration, please visit the web page of the

Software Task Group on [www.asqrs.org](http://www.asqrs.org). The Software Task Group is updating the membership list. If you are interested in joining, please send an e-mail to Trudy Howles at [tmh@cs.rit.edu](mailto:tmh@cs.rit.edu).