

Quality is a perception that resides in the mind of the buyer.

Most people think they can tell high quality products from low quality ones. In reality things are not so obvious. If there are doubts with products that you can see, feel and even taste, what about a service like pest control, which is intangible.

There are 2 aspects to quality pest control

- A. The Functional Aspect, and
- B. The Aesthetic Aspect.

### **A. The Functional Aspect**

The Functional Aspect of pest control is to get rid of the targeted pest. Originally it was accepted that the pest infestation be brought down to tolerable level. That was what clients were expecting because they accepted that environmental conditions encouraged such pest activities. They could tolerate some minor infestation but what they wanted was that you responded fast. Preferably you were at their doorstep on the very day, if they cannot tolerate the infestation.

Then when clients travelled more extensively and were better exposed to the media, this expectation changed. They began asking for a pest-free environment. This really got the industry busy. Those operators who resisted, lost business to those who worked hard at fulfilling this expectation.

Today a new trend has been set in motion. Clients are beginning to demand that we go beyond pest control. In addition to zero infestation, they are asking for recommendations on prevention. They are asking reports, reports and more reports. This is more with ISO Certifications and more recently, the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) Scheme.

In essence they are asking for their pest control company to be their extra pair of eyes to tell them how they can improve their sanitation and housekeeping practices. They want the situation to be managed, not left to "hit and miss" efforts. Hence the new term "Pest Management".



In addition they still want quick response. The electronic age has speeded up the pace at which people expect things to take place. Try telling your client that you will be 5 hours later! And say that it is your quality of service! What happens if your friendly competitor is able to respond within 2 hours?

What you are also going to experience is a timeless dimension. In Cyberspace, there is no time. People can point and click anytime of the day. They are now expecting us to provide 24-hour service. And they do not want to talk to an answering machine. They want to talk to a person, anytime of the day.

Are pest control companies ready to take on these challenges? Is your company in the forefront of these changes and will you moult from "Pest Control" into "Pest Management"?

### B. The Aesthetic Aspect

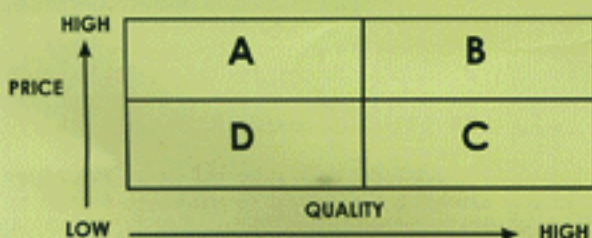
This is probably the most neglected part of many pest control companies. Why? After spending much time and energy on the Functional Aspect most people think they have done their job. The Aesthetic Aspect makes your quality more tangible. They contribute to the "feel good" part of doing business.

Let me elaborate on these:

1. Physical Appearance of your field staff, your van and your equipment,
2. Your Stationery and Reporting Format,
3. Courtesy extended by your staff,
4. Obeying Client's Instructions
5. Commitment to Environment Safety,
6. Reputation of your Company, and
7. Price You Charge.

The Quality-Price Quadrant

If we draw a Quality-Price Quadrant, it will be interesting to see where your company stands.



"A" is where you enjoy high price but you deliver low quality.

"B" means a lot of hard work where you deliver high quality but then the rewards are also satisfying because you enjoy high price

"C" is a terrible position to be in because you deliver high quality but you are not charging high prices.

"D" is where you provide what often referred to as "basic pest control"

I now have a few searching questions for you:

- Where is your company? "A", "B", "C", or "D"
- Was this a conscious choice or did you get into this position by accident?
- Do all employees in your company understand where you are and what level of quality is expected from them?
- Do your clients know what to expect?
- What is your long-term plan?
- Are you happy with your market share?

Personally I find it easier to be in quadrant "B". Here you need to narrow your focus on what the clients want and you meet their expectation with a higher price. Yes, it is tough as my colleagues in the company will tell you, but it is worth it. For a start because we get better prices we can afford to pay our people well.

### Conclusion

I hope in this article I have succeeded in raising many questions about quality and getting you to think about how your company is tackling it.

If you adopt this quality strategy, it is more difficult for your competitors to outgun you. They will need to work harder and smarter than your team. The trouble with a low price strategy is that there will always be someone who will come and offer a lower price.



## The 17th FAOPMA Annual Convention

Period : November 22-24, 2005

Venue : KINTEX, Goyang, Korea

### Theme: Better Environment through Integrated Pest Management

"I encourage you to take full advantage of the programs. Under the above Theme, we will be better able to meet the demand of our pest management by sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences.

Also you may have a chance to participate in an exhibition which exhibits new technology, medical supplies and equipment of the pest management."

President,  
Korea Pest Control Association

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