

The Diamond Approach to Quality Improvement in Food Service

Diamonds are a girl's best friend and are brilliant to behold. When you examine at them you look at the 4 C's—Clarity, Cut, Color, and Carat. So what does a diamond have to do with food service? Consider using the diamond approach to quality improvement and look at the Diamond 4C's™ of food service—**C**ompliance, **C**ourtesy, **C**uisine, and **C**ustomization.

by | Linda S. Eck Mills, MBA, RD, LDN, FADA

The Diamond 4C's are your “best friend” in the new Diamond Quality Improvement (DQI) model. Quality doesn't just happen, it's a strategic process. The purpose is to help you focus on the right problem, at the right time, and determine the right solution.

Compliance

Compliance looks at safety and regulatory compliance, core competencies, and is non-negotiable. It's all about providing a safe, clean, and efficient environment for patients, staff, and visitors. Look at employee hygiene, cleaning and sanitation, food handling, and facility maintenance.

Courtesy

Courtesy deals with customer satisfaction. Respect the emotions, abilities, and culture of those you serve, work with, and greet. This is where professionalism, flexibility,

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This article was prepared by Linda Eck Mills, but concepts contained herein are authored by Sharon Cox and Crystal Duncan.



DQI Dashboard for Decision-Making™

	Food	Associate/Staff	Communication/ Technology	Equipment/Layout
Compliance				
Courtesy				
Cuisine				
Customization				

Priority 1—Non-negotiable or Essential | **Priority 2**—Core business | **Priority 3**—Competitive opportunity

Sample Completed DQI Dashboard for Healthcare Segment Decision-Making

	Food	Associate/Staff	Communication/ Technology	Equipment/Layout
Compliance	1	1	1	1
Courtesy	3	2	3	3
Cuisine	2	3	3	2
Customization	3	3	3	3

NOTE: This grid is customized for the Healthcare segment. The DQI model can be modified for various other settings. Priority levels may shift depending on industry segment.

Diamond 4C's Grid—Ideas for Innovation (Quality Improvement)

	Food	Associate/Staff	Communication/ Technology	Equipment/Layout
Compliance	Use a T-stick to temp thin meats	Glove2Go™, Cool Chef Headband, Cool Chef Scarf	NAFEM data protocol, RFI tags (bar codes), Computerized HACCP	NSF/UL equipment
Courtesy	Guest paging by iPhone	Room service	Digital dining	Tea cart service between meals
Cuisine	Mini desserts, flatbreads	Presentation style	Nutrient analysis available to customer	Cost effectiveness
Customization	Partnership with suppliers	Staff training	Blogs	Equipment suites

respect for customer needs, accessibility, and partnership all come together.

Cuisine

Cuisine is providing wholesome and delicious foods to those we serve. Consider culinary expertise, cost effectiveness, variety, freshness, and nutrient analysis.

Customization

Customization involves creativity, innovation, and competitive opportunities. This methodology is a tool for improving quality in food service. It empowers foodservice leaders to develop clear strategies and “win-win” solutions for improving the operation with efficient use of time and resources.

Let’s back up a minute and look at the FACE™ of the key foodservice delivery systems—Food, Associates/staff, Communication/technology, and Equipment/layout and design. These are the key resources in the department. You need to align the Diamond 4C’s with FACE and keep polishing to make a “brilliant” department. But where do you start? Strategic planning embraces Juran’s trilogy of quality—quality planning, quality improvement, and quality control.

Quality Planning

Quality planning includes developing mission/vision statements, assessing the voice of the customer, organizing all customer data, translating the voice of the customer into specific needs, and finally determining critical quality issues. Look at customer feedback, dissatisfaction, and evaluations. Seek to understand the customer by probing and discovering through interviews and focus groups. Then determine priorities for your operation.

Use the grid on the adjacent page for decision-making and prioritization. Remember that the priority matrix will help you prioritize your solutions.

Quality Improvement

In quality improvement the critical quality issues are categorized according to 4C’s service standards. Innovations

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need to be planned to be successful. Map the critical quality issues into a success grid. See adjacent page.

Once the success grid is completed, decide what three or four things need to be done for the year. Develop the project team for each strategy before conducting a pilot.

Quality Control

Quality control is the final phase. There are two components—monitoring and sustaining changes. Quality control becomes your benchmarking. Conduct weekly team meetings to review and update the projects. Standardize new processes through staff education and training, update policies and procedures, validate output metrics and continue to monitor, and develop contingency plans for each new process.

This new quality control model gives you a how-to and win-win strategy to be successful. Hone in on the areas you need to focus on to meet the strategic goals to be unique and innovative. Go for the “WOW!” to make your department the best while striving for sustainable improvement in your operation. **DM**

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REFERENCE

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