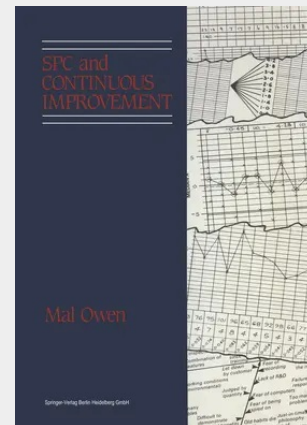


SPC and Continuous Improvement

There is no doubt that quality has become a major feature in the survival plan of organisations. With diminishing markets resulting from improved competitive performance and the associated factor of single-sourcing arrangements by the major organisations, it is clear that unless there is a commitment to change, organisations will lose their competitive edge. This will unfortunately mean elimination and the resultant harsh realities that come with it for the employees. It has been said on many platforms that unemployment is not inevitable. Those organisations which recognise the requirements for survival know that quality, and its association with customer satisfaction, is now a key issue. Survival programmes based on quality improvement require an unrelenting commitment to include everyone, from the Managing Director down, in an ongoing, never-ending involvement based on monitoring, and improving, all our activities. These Total Quality Management (TQM) programmes, whatever their specific nature, have a common theme of measuring and then improving. This text describes the philosophy and techniques of one type of involvement programme-Statistical Process Control (SPC). The material to follow suggests that SPC is a major element of any programme and, if properly applied, could be a complete programme in itself. Measuring and improving means that data must be collected, used, understood, interpreted and analysed, and thereby lies the difficulty.

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106,99 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9783662224212

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-3-662-22421-2

Verlag: Springer

Erscheinungstermin: 03.10.2013

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2013

Produktform: Kartoniert

Gewicht: 1005 g

Seiten: 368

Format (B x H): 210 x 297 mm

