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# Raising the Bar

**P**CI has initiated numerous successful programs which have benefited the marketplace, the Institute and its membership. Without question, the most beneficial project undertaken has been the Plant Certification Program. This initiative has set a standard of product quality and procedures that is now a key component in specifications in both the private and public sectors.

Stephen R. Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," a widely acclaimed self help reference, can easily be applied to the quality process. Each of Habits 1 through 6 are the procedures we can apply to our current Plant Certification Quality Program. My focal point for this year as Chairman of PCI is Covey's Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw. Only through continuous self evaluation and improvement can we as producers, as an Institute, and also as an industry, continue to grow and increase our market share.

The title of this message, "Raising the Bar," refers to elevating the level of the way we do business. Although, this article is directed at plant produced product quality, future Chairman's Messages this year will report on the programs, current and future, planned by our Institute to help our members ensure the constant improvement of our overall product. This is not limited to products produced by our plants but also includes marketing, distribution of literature, standardization of details, and erector qualification.

Although the PCI Plant Certification Program can be effectively used as a marketing tool, it can have negative marketing consequences if its primary function, that of a management tool, is improperly utilized. Quoting a nationally recognized authority on this subject, "Marketing is too important to leave to the marketing department," we should realize that quality and an effective quality program is too important to leave exclusively to a quality assurance department. Management must take an active role to ensure the success of the program.

Our industry has reached a point whereby we no longer advertise quality. It is now a given. We must provide the highest possible level of quality in order to be a player in our competitive marketplace.

To those of us who have undertaken quality improvement programs, the Cost of Poor Quality (COPQ, referred to in the Six Sigma process improvement) is a true awakening. These costs have been shown to be as high as 5 percent

of sales. Participating in a quality improvement program will show an immediate return on investment and will also result in a gain in customer satisfaction.

Our national marketing program is making great strides in increasing awareness of precast/prestressed concrete and will elevate our product to a must consider level. However, the implied benefit of this consideration, repeat incorporation in design, can only be accomplished if we consistently furnish a high quality product to our customer.

Raising the bar starts with the producers. We must continually strive toward self improvement and higher levels of quality of our product. Improvement can best be achieved through self appraisal: constant review of deficiency reports and a commitment to make the process more efficient. For example, we must be willing to bite the bullet and reject products in the plant if necessary.

By July of this year, all plants will be functioning under the guidelines established by their QSM (Quality System Manual). This manual should be used to supplement Quality Control Manuals 116 and 117 and to set standards even higher than those mandated by 116 and 117. Abiding by these dictates will ensure repeat consideration by the design community.

An important factor in producing a quality product is in the level of training experienced by plant personnel. The QC technician schools offered throughout the year provide the opportunity to train not only inspection personnel but manufacturing and engineering staff as well. QC technician certification should also be viewed as an educational tool in order to help the precaster produce a higher quality product.

The focus in my address to the Convention last September was to encourage participation in PCI programs. These programs, especially those which help us improve our total product, will result in an increase to our level of consideration, providing the opportunity for greater market share. I look forward to promoting these programs in the coming year and hope you agree that we will all profit from greater participation and higher quality in our product.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Saul Shenkman".