



~ Supplier Qualification in the Nuclear Industry ~

U.S. Steel Mini-Mill Pursues Nuclear Industry Qualified Status

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In 2002, GQM was engaged to assist a steel re-bar manufacturer (mini-mill) with achieving qualification status in the re-emerging nuclear industry. As a part of the effort, the following was prepared for the client's newsletter.

What is a "Nuclear Qualified Supplier"?

Simply put, a "Quality Supplier" has demonstrated the ability to supply products while meeting customer quality system requirements. One of the many potential customers that require "qualification" is Bechtel National, Inc., a multi-billion dollar, multi-national design, construction, and construction management company.

Achieving qualified status with Bechtel and placement on their Qualified Suppliers List (QSL) affords the opportunity to sell products in a large industry sector previously unavailable. It does not guarantee sales, but it does increase numerous opportunities for the company.

The quality requirements are primarily driven by the American Society for Mechanical Engineers standard known as ASME / NQA-1 "Quality Assurance Program Requirements for Nuclear Facilities."

NQA-1 includes requirements to ensure consistent product and service quality. *In layman terms the requirements include:*

- ♦ **People Quality** – Personnel are trained in specific job functions, such as crane operator or bundler operator. Criteria are established to ensure a level of competency, consistency and proficiency.

- ♦ **Information Quality** – Procedures and instructions that ensure timely and accurate information throughout the company. This includes information such as heat chemistries, product specifications, and final lab results.
- ♦ **Product Quality** – Products being made comply with set standards. In the steel making industry, product must meet ASTM, AISC, and other industry standards.
- ♦ **Service Quality** – A system exists to meet the delivery dates, provide accurate information and timely customer compliant resolution.

What are the Benefits?

Major corporations like Bechtel National are seeking new "Qualified Suppliers." As an example, Bechtel is currently managing some 900 projects in 60 countries. They are considered a premier global engineering and construction company that builds dams (e.g., Hoover Dam), massive highway projects, airports, industrial facilities, and natural gas pipelines and energy facilities.

What's the Bottom Line?

Bechtel is not the only company that requires a quality system like NQA-1 to be in place to be considered a qualified supplier. Most contractors with the Department of Energy also require NQA-1 qualification. Qualifying to the NQA-1 standard can create additional avenues for sales in a brutal global market.

The effect on the individual worker will be in the form of consistent training and participation. Right now many incumbents' train new people



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on-the-job. This won't change. But, what will be added is a set list of skills everyone will train to and each trainee must meet. This will ensure consistency, a key requirement.

What's Your Role?

- ◆ **Understand** that customers need to visit and talk with employees to see determine the company can be qualified for NAQ-1 class products and services.
- ◆ **Help implement** the quality system means doing the job according to procedures and instructions. This will increase accuracy and consistency. Customers look to see that this is how the company operates.
- ◆ **Realize that customers** review documents and reports as a way to determine if the company can be "Qualified" and placed on their Approved Suppliers List.
- ◆ **Look for ways to help each other** improve work methods and product quality.

About the author ~

Paul W. Gladieux is CEO & Founder of Global Quality Management Associates. GQM provides full-service quality management consulting and training to companies worldwide. He has over 30 years experience in the profession in a wide range of business sectors.

Visit GQM's Web site at www.GQMassociates.com

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