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## Interview with W. Edwards Deming

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## **W. Edwards Deming**

(Interviewed on 10 April 1991, Washington, DC)

### Video Roll #1a

*Q: Relative to Dr. Juran, as I mentioned to you, I'm spending time with folks that have known him for a number of years and can shed some insight into both him as an individual and, uh, also as a professional {inaudible}.*

*Dr. Deming, tell me when you first met Dr. Juran and under what circumstances.*

DR. DEMING: I'm not sure if I could recall the first meeting. One of the first ones was, in Washington. I, have a hard time to give you, approximation to the date. He took me to lunch in Washington, to a Hungarian restaurant. Had cheese blintzes and, a nice talk about Western Electric, other things.

I, resolved to, take him to lunch sometime, but every time I tried to, the lunch was free to both of us. I had no chance to repay him all these years. Interest has amounted up to quite a bit by now.

*Q: Where were you working at that time, when you first met him?*

DR. DEMING: I'm not sure.

*Q: Uh huh. The, uh, what were your first impressions of Joe Juran?*

DR. DEMING: Well, he had, of course, great understanding about Western Electric. And, I'm a good listener, learn from anybody.

*Q: And, as an individual, did you have any impressions on him?*

DR. DEMING: No.

*Q: Uh huh. Uh, perhaps you can tell me=*

DR. DEMING: He was very kind, though, to call me up and invite me to lunch. Appreciated that.

*Q: The, your first invitation to Japan, by JUSE, which was 1950, I believe, was followed several years later by Dr. Juran's first visit at the invitation of JUSE. Can you tell me a bit about what you brought to the Japanese and, what was it that Joe Juran brought to Japan?*

DR. DEMING: I took to Japan the principle of a system, an optimization of a system. A system requires an aim. The aim is a value judgment. Seemed to me that, a good aim for a system would be, profit to shareholders, ability to pay the bank, resolution to stay in business by providing to the customer what will help him, what will entice him to buy it.

And the component on system must have an aim, as I said. Another aim would be, quality of life, whatever that is, for all employees of the organization, and let's say, for everybody else.

A system is composed of components. In a system, the components works for the optimization of the aim of the system. They're not competitive. They try to optimize the

Whole system. That is what I took to Japan. But not any American practice. It was new.

The Japanese listened and learned. Top management listened and learned, and so did engineers. That was my theme. And the flow diagram, which starts with the customer, leads into a design of product, design of service.

This flow diagram is actually an organization chart because it shows everybody what his job is. It goes around and, ends up with a customer, where you started from. Study the customer. What will help him more? How, could, how could he be of greater service to him?

The components, as I said, are not competitive, but work toward optimization of the aim of the system. A system must be managed. It will not manage itself. That's what I took to Japan.

That flow diagram was on the blackboard at every conference that top management, at that trip, at every other trip, and then onward. I was back in six months, back in another six months, back in another two years. Quite a number of trips, That flow diagram was on the blackboard, all day at every conference of top management. All day, every day in the teaching of engineers, eight-day course it was, from eight in the morning until after five at night.

That first summer, 1950, was hot, no air conditioning. I worked hard. The Japanese top management listened. Engineers listened. I took to Japan not American practice, but something new. There was no secret about it. The western world has still not listened. The Japanese listened. And in a few years, their products were known for quality the world over.

They dispelled the idea that Japanese products are shoddy, cheap--but worth the price. People began to see, the world over, that the Japanese had quality and were improving. That took place in a short while. I predicted it would take five years. They did it in much less time than that--in three or four years they were on the way, known the world over for quality and continual improvement of quality.

No secret about it, the western world may still learn it. It may be too late.

*Q: Four years after that visit, also on a hot summer, Joe Juran went to, uh, Japan. What was it that he brought to the Japanese?*

DR. DEMING: I do not know.

*Q: Uh huh. Uh, tell me your evaluation of Dr. Juran's philosophy and his, uh--*

DR. DEMING: I'm not sure if I have an answer, except words that he wrote himself about Dr. Shewhart, in the journal INDUSTRIAL QUALITY CONTROL for August, 1967. He wrote these words: "At best, it seems to me, Dr. Shewhart's philosophical concept have joined innumerable streams that collect and flow into our consciousness, so thoroughly co-mingled that we cannot trace the sources."

I don't agree with that, but I think those words that he wrote would answer your question.

*Q: There, uh, there seems to be an enormous amount of time and energy spent, particularly by the media, comparing the methods of Deming and Juran, and they often toss in some*

*others, like our friend in Florida. Uh, how are they different, or similar?*

DR. DEMING: I do not know and I don't see such things. Maybe you do. I don't.

*Q: Do you think too much time is spent discussing those things?*

DR. DEMING: I don't know about it. As I say, I've never heard of them.

*Q: Uh huh. Uh, can you tell me what influence, if any, Joe Juran's work has had on your thinking?*

DR. DEMING: I've learned a lot from him. I learn from anybody. He made the statement, could have been long about 1954, could have been earlier, that when people on the job, let's say hourly workers, have achieved statistical control of their process, they have put in the job all that they have to offer. Powerful statement. I've never forgotten it.

And he also said, "Anybody's first job is to get statistical control of his work." His first job. Now, of course, all this applies to possibly three percent of the problems of almost any company in the western world, be it service or manufacturing. That covers about three percent of the problems. The other 97 percent, I try to work on.

Seems to me they are the important ones. The 97 percent. That's where my interest is.

*Q: Do you have any, uh, antidotes that might, uh, capture Joe Juran's personality?*

DR. DEMING: Oh, I'm sorry. I don't understand. Try again.

*Q: Oh, do you have any, uh, stories that you can relate that, that uh, demonstrate or capture Joe Juran's personality as an individual?*

DR. DEMING: Oh, I think that article in the INDUSTRIAL QUALITY CONTROL for August 1967 portrays him very well. I just read, just recited one paragraph from it. Other lines in the article, I think, give a good description. But I don't have them with, don't have those lines with me.

*Q: Can you, uh, give me some adjectives that describe Dr. Juran.*

DR. DEMING: Oh, you're describing a visit with Dr. Shewhart, where Dr. Shewhart possibly came to Western Electric, back to Western Electric. And, uh, Dr. Juran was, uh, coaching him. He, uh, Dr. Juran remarked about the naivete of Dr. Shewhart, how he, uh, seemed never to have been around a factory before, and had questions which indicated his ignorance of what the job was. Pretty good illustration, I think. Dr. Shewhart will be known forever.

*Q: The, are the some, uh, adjectives that you would give to Joe Juran, to describe him? Uh, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but--*

DR. DEMING: No, no I don't think so.

*Q: No.*

DR. DEMING: I'd rather not. Thank you much.

*Q: Uh, the media has taken upon itself to, to brand you and Juran as the gurus of quality, for better or worse. In the years to come, who do you think will become the next generation of gurus.*

DR. DEMING: Well, I don't know the word. Indian word. I don't use it. You'll have to find some other language to ask me a question.

*Q: The, uh, I think what they mean by it is they're looked upon as the leaders in quality thinking.*

DR. DEMING: I can name some. My students, my interns, that have travelled with me. Dr. Barbara Lawton, Dr. Joyce Orsini, my student, my intern, with Forham University. Dr. Michael Tveite, consultant, lives in Minneapolis. Dr. Thomas Nolan, lives in Washington. And Dr. Nida Backaitis, B-A-C-K-A-I-T-I-S, Nida Backaitis, a coming star. My intern, my student. Did her thesis under my direction at Columbia University and travelled with me for two years.

Those are just some examples. Perhaps I named the greatest star last of all, but they're all good. There are others I can't think of right this minute.

*Q: Uh, in the United States=*

DR. DEMING: Dr. Gypsy Ranney, R-A-N-N-E-Y, with the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and with General Motors. Well-known consultant. Those are some.

*Q: In the, uh, United States, uh, modern industrial society has been built very much on the Taylor System, which separates planning from execution. And that approach seems to fly in the face of, uh, team work and cooperation. And Dr. Juran has said, or published that he feels an abolishment of Taylorism in the future. What are your thoughts on that?*

DR. DEMING: Dr. Juran is the authority on Taylor. Mr. Taylor, himself, did not wish to call his book, SCIENTIFI~MANAGEMENT. He tried to talk his publisher into another title, which I do not recall at this moment. But his publisher overpowered him. The book came out as SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT.

I think that Mr. Taylor had a pretty good idea of where he stood. Maybe better than people give him credit for. But Dr. Juran is the authority.

*Q: The, uh, I've come to the end of my questions, relative to uh, Joe Juran. Unless there's any other comments you would like to make about your longtime friend.*

DR. DEMING: Well, I don't have any right this minute.

*Q: Well Dr.--*

DR. DEMING: Thank you very much, maybe some specific question, uh, some more that I can answer might be a good idea.

*Q: Well, I uh, these are the ones I had prepared relative to Dr. Juran. Uh, I'm very grateful for your spending a little bit of time with me this morning and, uh--*

DR. DEMING: My, uh, work is on the 97 percent of the problems of management. The losses, not knowable, caused by present practices of management, such as ranking people, salesman, divisions, regions, which leads to the merit system, which are destructive. Have the same evil in our schools, giving marks or grades. Destructive. Everybody knows the effect on our children. Our education is deplorable. Our educational system, for example, requires improvement in three actions. Number one, abolish marks or grading. Two, abolish merit ratings for teachers. Three, abolish comparison of schools by tests.

Until those three actions are taken, no advancement will be possible. Same thing applies to industry, government, education. All the same thing. Health care--anything, whatever.

*Q: Have you seen any indicators that that's going to happen?*

DR. DEMING: Is it happening? Some, enough, fast enough? I don't know. I don't make predictions. I'm simply enjoying my work very, very much.

*Q: Thank you very much. I appreciate--*

DR. DEMING: My pleasure.

*[Background sounds.]*

*Q: Terrific. All right. They've asked if we would just sit quietly for 30 seconds so they can record just the sound of the room.*

DR. DEMING: Oh, I think we could do that. Ha ha.

*VOICE: Room tone at Marriot Crystal C. Dr. Deming.  
Thank you, gentlemen.*

*Q: Okay.*

DR. DEMING: Are you able to, uh, take out the sound of the room from the, uh, recording?

*VOICE: Uh, yeah, what they do is sometimes, when they edit the piece, they, uh, they want to cut out, an end of a sentence. So, what they do is, instead of just taking it out and leaving nothing there--you can notice a difference.*

DR. DEMING: Oh.

*Q: He's asking if room tone can be removed from=  
[END OF VIDEO]*