

10-29-1991

Interview with Charles Zeynel

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Dr. Joseph M. Juran Collection, "Interview with Charles Zeynel" (1991). *'An Immigrant's Gift': Interviews about the Life and Impact of Dr. Joseph M. Juran*. 3.
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Charles Zeynel

(Interviewed on 29 October 1991, Atlanta, GA)

Video Rolls #36-37

Q: How do you want your name?

ZEYNEL: Charlie. Z-E- Y-N-E-L.

Q: And your title?

ZEYNEL: Vice president, general manager. Sounds good, right? Petro ...

Q: Canada. You were invited to participate.

ZEYNEL: Right ...

Q: What connection have you had with him?

ZEYNEL: Well, it started out, oh, about seven years ago, when I was selected to become the first quality director within Union Carbide. And someone said, well, if you really want to find out about quality, we've got you signed up for this seminar.

And, of course, the seminar was the IM:PRO. I guess it was IMPRO '83. It had to be. And that was my first exposure to Dr. Juran. Apart from the readings and some of the discussions we'd had about him.

Q: What was attractive about Juran?

ZEYNEL: Well, he had, I think, a much more general approach -- what I would call a more of a user-friendly approach. It wasn't geared to just one facet of quality, as some of the others might have been.

It was -- and it was also much more attractive to those of us who were in what I would call general management. And it gave us things that we could -- that we could apply very easily, across the whole spectrum, rather than just focusing in on production or one side of the business.

Q: Do you remember the first time you met Dr. Juran face- to- face?

ZEYNEL: The very first time was -- was at IMPRO.

And was -- you know, with crowds of other people. And I was introduced to him, along with several other people that I

Q: What was your impression of him?

ZEYNEL: I was expecting a giant. And I saw this very nice man. And a very a -- my first impression was what a quiet, unassuming man. Because actually, I had seen him outside at one of the breaks of the IMPRO, and he was standing there by himself. And he looked kind of lost.

And there was a combination of people who were afraid to go up to him because of his reputation. And there he was, sitting all by himself, and he just looked like he needed someone to talk to. Just seemed like a very nice, unassuming person. That was my first impression.

I was expecting a giant, in terms of stature and I think just presence, and just saw a very, very meek and unassuming person. It was really my first impression.

Q: How have continued exposures to Dr. Juran altered your first impression?

ZEYNEL: He speaks his mind. He's not that meek and unassuming when he has something to say. That's really, I think, the main thing that struck me.

Q: What's a guru really like?

ZEYNEL: Oh, lord. A guru? I think, typically, people expect an evangelistic, messiah-like person, all out of proportion. I think that's what usually comes to mind when one speaks of guru. Who has followers who blindly follow. Who has people that sit at their, you know, at their feet and grasp every word, or accept every word that comes out.

I think that's what, typically, people think of a guru, who speaks -- who speaks the absolute truth.

Q: How does he fit your definition of guru?

ZEYNEL: Oh, I think definitely, you know, in terms of when he speaks, people listen, to quote an ad. Because he, from the times I've seen him, he speaks -- when he speaks, he has a great deal to say.

In terms of the stature and the messiah-like presence, I think that's a misconception, at least in his case. I don't see that overwhelming need, almost a -- I hate to say this, but in terms of gurus, sometimes people, I think, equate guru with megalomania. I don't see that in Dr. Juran.

Q: What happens in rooms of executives when he walks into those rooms?

ZEYNEL: Well, the limited experience that I've had, typically, you take him in the room where you've got the CEO or the president or senior corporations. Most corporations who are used to having their own way, and used to, frankly, running their meetings where everyone hangs on their word. You see a transformation.

Typically, they become almost child-like. It's like being back in school. The professor's walked in and they're back in their seats. And so you do see a transformation." But what I think really seeing is a tremendous amount of respect for his knowledge and his reputation.

Q: What do you find most surprising about Dr. Juran?

ZEYNEL: Most surprising. Again, because perhaps I haven't known him as long as many people -- it's the fact that he's so human. One of my first exposures to him was in a TV studio when he was shooting, I think, the second Juran Series. And just seeing him there as a normal human being, and frustrated and angry in having to repeat things.

I think that was really my -- the impression that he's a very human person, and not at all someone that anyone should be afraid of.

Q: Do you know of the Juran humor?

ZEYNEL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Q: Tell us some of the Juran humor?

ZEYNEL: Well, the one that applies to me personally was, we had proudly put together our first quality tape. It was -- was, you know, internal affair. And, of course, we were very proud of it; probably didn't realize how amateurish it might have been to some people.

And since it was -- it was designed to be partly a motivational tape, and with my personal influence, I guess I had a lot to say about it. I wanted some very upbeat music. And so we, I think, included as the opening piece something from by the Pointer Sisters.

And when Dr. Juran first saw it, we asked him to view the tape, and he said, that's nice, he says, but my taste sort of --

he says, the music's a little bit unusual. He says, my tastes run to classical.

And my boss at the time said, well, that's because there's a

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an looked at him and said, you mean

about three generation gaps. That was, I think, a personal point.

Q: What are the greatest challenges facing Dr. Juran in the next few years?

ZEYNEL: Well, I'm always amazed by the fact that he's booked up years ahead. I think the challenges just keeping up with demands of all the people in the world who are -- now understand what it is he's been trying to tell them all these years.

So, to me, I think the challenge is to continue to -- to really spread the word.

Q: What's the perception of Dr. Juran in all those other places?

ZEYNEL: It's -- they've all heard of him. It's funny, I mean, we still get the jokes that he's a rock group.

As I was leaving for this particular meeting, again, I thought I was going off to the Juran IMPRO. And they said, oh, you're going off to see the rock star again. And I guess it's the association Duran Duran.

The impression is -- is one of -- his reputation precedes him now. It's at least within the Carbide organization, Juran is probably better known than some of the gurus. I'll mention the name, Deming.

Because I think even though we've -- we've tried to incorporate the teachings of all the so-called experts in the field, ranging from the, you know, the very specific in their domains, to the generalists. Dr. Juran seems to cover the

whole spectrum much better.

And within the Carbide organization, at least, he's probably the most well known.

Q: Dr. Juran is the man who -- ?

ZEYNEL: That's very easy. Dr. Juran is the man who changed my life, unequivocally, personally.

Q: Can you share it with us?

ZEYNEL: Sure. I was just another business manager within, you know, within a corporation, trying to climb the corporate ladder, when I became exposed to his teachings.

And I would have to say that I think that he must have struck a responsive chord within me. Maybe it was something I had always wanted to do or felt that -- and as far as I'm concerned, it's changed my life personally. At home, with the kids, you know, my family they'll make fun of me. And everything's quality this and everything's quality that.

Everyone that I meet and within my own, you know, in my career. It's definitely changed the way I look at everything. The way I do everything.

Q: What does it say for' him that it's taken 50 years for the world to come around?

ZEYNEL: He must have a tremendous amount of courage and patience and perseverance, because, you know, when I climbed on board, like most other people, it was already acceptable. He was out there trying to preach it long before it was popular.

And, of course, he was one of the standard bearers. It must say a awful lot about his perseverance and dedication and, frankly, vision. We use the word, vision, very lightly, but he must have had incredible vision. And, frankly, I think,

he must be a very, very stubborn man to have just kept pushing against all the people who just refused to listen or understand.

Because even today, we still find that one of our biggest frustrations is that people just don't really understand what it's all about.

Q: What are inhibitors to quality attainment?

ZEYNEL: Couple of things. I think first of all it's -- I think it's very, very difficult for people to truly accept that they, themselves, must continually change. I think, typically, quality is something that, yes, it's good, of course, it's good, and we'll have someone else improve.

So I think, first of all -- and, again, for mostly for executives and people leading this, it's so difficult for them to accept that they must change, and not just once, but continuously.

And secondly, it's that once the bloom is off, the initial euphoria, it takes a lot of perseverance. It's doesn't get any easier, frankly. I think people think that quality is something that once you're over that first hump, it's smooth sailing. It's just raising the bar.

And I think it just gets really tiring sometimes. I mean, personally, I think there are days when I just wish that I'd never heard of it. It just gets very tough.

Q: Why should people see a documentary on Dr. Juran?

ZEYNEL: Because I think it would expose these teachings beyond the so-called corporate world and into the mainstream. My kids were more excited about some of these concepts.

And, frankly, and some of their teachers are. I've given some -- several talks on it in schools and places where they've invited me and ostensibly thinking that I would tell

them something about the business world, you know, show and tell, here's dad.

And, typically, I've talked to them about the quality effort. And it's had tremendous impact. It shows that you can improve the world we're in. And I think if we could get Dr. Juran out into the mainstream, onto television, in front of the kids, and educators of this -- you know, of the country, they'd have a lot to learn, to help improve the world we live in.

I know that sounds very noble and everything, but I think -- the whole effort lends itself to life overall.

Q: How is life different because of him?

ZEYNEL: Well, I think you have -- I don't know if it's a whole generation, but you must have legions now of corporate America, or corporate whatever, you know, Germany or corporate England, who are no longer just doing things, I think, just for the sake of profit.

But they're also doing -- it's -- I truly believe it's awakened the whole consciousness that's existed. Whether it's social consciousness, or environmental consciousness. Because when you try to do things better, even if it is in pursuit of profit, you touch on all other parts of life.

So I think that bringing quality to the forefront, beyond just profitability, really does touch on improving quality in the world we live in, and not just the quality of products.

Q: How much is quality management techniques, how much is government intervention?

ZEYNEL: Well, that's a tough question. The only answer I can give you to that is in my personal case. That question or that statement, typically, makes me angry. Because it sort of says, well, you have to be Japanese to be really successful at this.

And I think if you take that attitude, then you -- you've

lost before you even begun.

I think the Japanese have been very successful in implementing the quality effort. But, again, if you look at it, it's Japan incorporated, it's certain Japanese companies. Lot of Japanese companies don't have the levels of quality they'd like to.

So I think it's truly a case of a combination of being in on the ground floor; yes, having, obviously, some sort of social structure and cultural background that says, when we, you know, when we start something, we're very disciplined, we're very dedicated, let's go do it.

But, on the other hand, I'd like to think that -- take the American culture. I mean, the American culture typically is considered -- one of the attributes of American culture is -- is a creativity, a sense of innovativeness, a sense of, you know, when the chips are down, we can really get things done.

I think if you combine that cultural element with the quality school of thinking, I think you've got a combination that'll be impossible to beat. And that's the message we try and preach is, you know, take good old Yankee ingenuity and combine it with the quality message, and there's no reason why we can't be the best, either.

(END OF TAPE 36, START TAPE 37)

Q: What movie is going to be in your mind?

ZEYNEL: That's a tough question. I'm not sure, I'm really not sure. Take a minute to think about it. Nothing comes to mind. Try another question.

Q: Have you ever called him and said, help?

ZEYNEL: Not directly. I guess, never just called up and said, help. I may have talked to some of the folks in the

Juran Institute for help.

But the time -- maybe it's just timing, maybe it's just timing. The time we were struggling, we had sort of hit, what I call the one or the two-year lull, or the low point. We were struggling to get it beyond, really, just being perceived -- in spite of all our best efforts -- as a product quality improvement process.

We talked about the need to get it into the business side. And about that time, Dr. Juran, and I guess his colleagues at the Juran Institute, were talking about planning. They were starting their whole planning sequence. Planning for Quality.

And that was -- that struck a chord for us. It was a sort of a eureka, that's what we need to do, we need to get this into our planning of our business, our strategic planning concepts. Up until then, that was the missing piece.

So it wasn't so much that we reached out and asked him for help as much as that he seemed to have come up with an idea, about the time we were struggling for something. And it just matched very well.

Q: Why do you think the sharing? What role has he or the organization had in that sharing?

ZEYNEL: Well, in terms of the actual reason for sharing, I think it's a couple of things. One is that you're all so proud of our accomplishments. And so you come to meetings like this, and you have an opportunity to sort of share your pride with other people who can understand.

Sometimes you can accomplish something, but no one really understands what you've accomplished. Here, you come here and you know people are struggling to do the same things. So there's a lot of show and tell, and look how well we're doing.

Dr. Juran's contribution, obviously, and not only in having helped teach us how to do these things, is providing a forum, such as the IMPRO, where you can come together, and I

think that's one of his strengths.

We've come to these now over the years, and we've tried to bring more and more people. It's almost a -- we call them a recharging. We recharge our batteries at these meetings.

Because you go off and you struggle at home and you try and do these things. And you come here and you see other people trying to do it. And you sort of -- it's coming back to the touchstone, and saying, yeah, it's worth it.

And so, for us, I think, the contribution that Dr. Juran has made is providing forum where we can get together and share triumphs and also share some of the burden we're carrying.

Q: What do senior managers miss out on by not attending IMPRO?

ZEYNEL: Well, they miss the learning experience. They miss seeing how real it is. I think what they truly miss, though, is that everyone else really is doing it and perhaps if they don't get a little bit more serious about it, they might be missing the boat. I think that's what they really miss.

Q: Who did what in Japan?

ZEYNEL: Well, Deming does get all the press, so to speak. When people speak of the Japanese miracle, they always speak automatically of Deming and being the first one over there and the Deming Prize. Very rarely do you hear about Dr. Juran's participation.

And only those who, I think, have taken the time or who've read beyond just the typical introductory article on quality, realize that Dr. Juran's influence is probably just as deep and pervasive in the Japanese quality miracle -- if you will -- as Dr. Deming's. Except that Deming gets all the press because, I guess, maybe he had a better marketing person working for him.

Q: Have you seen examples of Dr. Juran's willingness to change, flexibility, desire to listen?

ZEYNEL: Again, more, perhaps, in the organization that he's involved with and I've got to believe that that's his influence. But I've seen the Juran Institute and the folks associated with it continually ask for feed-back. I've seen them continually change their materials.

They conduct focus sessions, they conduct meetings, they ask people to come on a regular basis to critique their materials to input, so, to me, that's a very refreshing change because what they're really saying is, oh, we're willing to improve, too. And we're constantly looking for ways, and we listen to the people involved.

So, yes, I think if -- you know, I've got to believe that's his influence.

Q: What makes Dr. Juran tick?

ZEYNEL: Something very special. I mean, it's ... he's a once-in-a-generation type of person. It's -- well, there's got to be some ego in there. I mean, there's got to be. I think that's what makes strong people tick.

There's also -- there has to be a tremendous zest for life, to be willing to put himself through some of the things he's put himself through. And even to day, the hours, and the miles, and the time that he dedicates to this I'm sure he doesn't need it to be comfortable. So there's got to be a tremendous zest for just sharing the message.

Q: . Do you think he's paid a price for his accomplishments?

ZEYNEL: I really don't know. I don't know enough about the private life of Dr. Juran, and his personal life. So I don't know if, you know, in terms of price -- there must be a

price. Forty years of wandering *in* the wilderness must have had its extremely frustrating moments.

I've got to believe that, for years and years, he probably wondered if it was even worth it, 'cause no one was listening. And it's in the -- in the -- really in recent years that people have come around.

So I'm sure there's been a price. It's got to be high price in frustration and loneliness and hours dedicated where no one was paying attention to his ... From that point of view, I guess there was quite a price.

Q: What one thought should people come away with?

ZEYNEL: Well, there's -- the -- the very obvious one which is that, you know, we should always be striving for improvement.

But that's -- I think the real thought that should come out, and it's in the one I try and preach whenever people -- whenever we talk about our quality effort, and I think it's the message that Dr. Juran exemplifies is if you really believe in something, you can make it happen. If you really want it to happen, just keep trying.

Because it eventually will. And I think he's -- he's demonstrated that personally in his life as well as the message he's given the rest of us.

Q: Can we catch the Japanese with their 30 year head start?

ZEYNEL: Well, if you put it in terms of American versus Japan, that's probably a tough -- tough challenge. Because they're -- it's into the system now. I mean, the education of Japanese school children now includes some of the quality concepts. We're not there yet. So, in those terms, it's a tough one.

But I think that's too simplistic. I don't think it's a

question of we against they. I truly think that this quality process, where we're trying to inculcate everywhere, is -- is something that everyone should take on a personal basis, on an individual company basis, on a group, on a -- you know, local neighborhood, a school.

I hate to see it in terms of we against they. I think it benefits everyone that touches it. It should be a personal race.

Q: What's the greatest satisfaction you've gotten out of your contact with Dr. Juran?

ZEYNEL: Oh, as I said earlier, it's changed my life. I think it -- I hate to say it's made me a better person. But I think what it has done is it's made me look for the good in other people. So, if nothing else, it's made me a much more of a positive thinker.

And being a positive thinker in today's world is, I think is a nice thing.

Q: What have I not asked you?

ZEYNEL: I think the thing that you should have asked me is how come Dr. Juran doesn't have the -- what's the word I'm trying to think of -- doesn't really consider it important that he become the messiah.

I mean, I think the amazing thing in my mind about Dr. Juran is that he is so self-effacing and unassuming, and I've never felt that he has had to be center stage in all this, unlike some -- you know, you asked me about gurus before. I mean, maybe that was the question. Most gurus like to be center stage.

I think what I've always found amazing about Dr. Juran is that he's willing to let others take the limelight, others take the credit, others carry the teaching forward. And he's just content, sometimes, just to be there, quiet in the background.

And I think that's something special. He could have made this into his personal stage, and he really hasn't

Q: Thank you.

(END OF TAPE 37)