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Interview with Jack Germain

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Jack Germain

(Interviewed on 19 June 1992 in Chicago, Illinois)

Video Roll # 7

Q: The spelling of your name and your title?

GERMAIN: It's Jack Germain. J-A-C-K G-E-R-M-A-I-N. Identified? You mean in terms of what my title was at Motorola and so forth? Well, I was Corporate Director of Quality at Motorola, Incorporated. And my title, when I retired, was Senior Vice President. How does that sound?

Q: Everywhere when people talk about quality, they talk about Motorola. As the guy who directed the effort, you are to be congratulated. As a pioneer, what was it like inventing the wheel?

GERMAIN: Inventing the wheel --you're going back to when we started all of this in -- when was it -- late '78, '79. What was it like then? There were a lot of problems, a lot of things to overcome. A lot of people to be convinced with good, hard, rational, facts and arguments as to why this thing would really work and why it was a necessary thing for Motorola, and so forth.

Way back, I think it was in '79, when we had one of our officers meetings, where we all got together and we were

talking about the various aspects of the company, that's when we really latched onto this idea: maybe our quality is not the greatest because there are some disgruntled customers, and maybe we ought to be doing something about it in a very important way.

And out of that meeting, in fact, came a number of things that the corporation decided to do differently. I was one of them. They took me out of a -- let's call it a senior management role -- running one of the major businesses here at Motorola, and they made me Corporate Director of Quality.

And we got into this thing. And they said: okay, Jack, you're the catalyst, you know. And that's sort of interesting. Now what? Well, we had, certainly had the top guys all lined up ready to go do battle and say let's make this a better company.

How do you get to better company? Like what? What are we going to make better.

And all those questions had to be raised, had to be written down. And then, cleverly, we had to go figure out how we're going to get answers for them, once we got the questions.

And then we had to go line up some 100,000 employees.

And, at that time, we had at least 55 major operations all over the world. And at least 11 languages to cope with. And that was some of the dimensions of the problems we had to deal with. Egads.

Q: What point in all of this did the name Joseph

Juran pop up?

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GERMAIN: Joseph Juran popped up in the early days, at the very beginning of all this. Because, well, take me. I'm not a quality professional, per se. My background is engineering. I came up through the ranks, as the line management and what have you.

I only know quality in the sense that most people know quality. So one of the first things I had to do was, well, if I'm a catalyst, what are we going to do? How are we going to change the company? And what are the things we ought to be doing?

And so you go learn -- you go turn to experts. And, of course, we talked to -- you know, I think that throughout Motorola, we must have talked to everybody who was an expert in his field, in one way or another way.

And we ended up with -- I think we spent more time with the Juran Institute as it's called now, than all the other companies. Because I liked what they had to say, and philosophy sort of lined up with what we wanted to do. And that's sort of how it began.

Q: Did you come into direct contact with Joe Juran along the way?

GERMAIN : Yes. I had seen him a number of times.

Once we invited him out here. He gave a lecture here in this very building, to a number of our key

executives.

And the purpose of that was sort of I wanted to bring in a leader in the field, so to speak, to help with this issue of buy-in, why it was important to do -- what we could accomplish by this. Deal with this whole issue of what

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turned out to be cost of quality, cost of per quality, whichever term you would like.

And we had him come in, I think for a whole day, and talked to a number of whoever we could muster from this campus to come and listen to him. And that turned out reasonably well

I have -- I have also been a couple of panels with him, throughout the years. And which ones, escape me at the moment. I remember there was one in Washington -- I can't even think of the name of it right now. But I do remember the instance.

Q: If you found yourself with the responsibility of writing a history of the American quality revolution, what would you say in the part devoted to Joseph Juran?

GERMAIN: The history of the revolution. I would say he had to be one of the major contributors to thought and ideas. Certainly as it appeared before -- what, well, we got into this when I ran into him in 1980, '82, in terms of what we had done at Motorola.

You know, I think he had a lot to contribute to what happened in the prior years in the thinking of

what should be done, how it should be done, the relationships of why it was important to a business, as so forth and so on.

And I don't -- and it wasn't until later that we really started to get an upsurge in all of this, and taking the ideas and the concepts and applying them in a more accelerated basis than had been done over the previous decades.

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Q: It's an interesting word, contributor. Joe Juran was a major contributor. What do you think are, now with hindsight, have been Joe Juran's major contributions to business in the United States?

GERMAIN: Well, from my perspective, I think -- **and** how we used him in Motorola --

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

GERMAIN: Well, how did -- give me the question again.

Q: You've identified Joe Juran as a major contributor to industry. As you look back, what do you think are Joe Juran's greatest contributions to American business?

GERMAIN: Well I -- I don't know all of what he was involved with, as far as stimulating, being part

of the Malcolm Baldrige process, which I think is a very important thing, although I know he served in some -- in some fashion on it, whether it was a judge, or part of the foundation, or one of the others, those facts escape me at this point.

I found, in our work, and one of the reasons that we, at Motorola, became directly associated with Joe Juran and the Juran Institute, is he -- unlike a lot of the other people you might have been associated with in this whole quality improvement area -- he taught you how to organize to solve problems to deal with the real things that a real improvement process had to cope with.

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And that was one of the reasons early in our development of our program at Motorola that we focused on -- on Joe Juran and his people, because they had a very good program to teach you how to organize to solve problems.

When we got into our program, in -- at Motorola, this was in about 1980, '81, where we decided we were going to have a ten-fold improvement in everything we did in five years, we created a situation for a lot of our people that they came to grips with the very serious problems and they didn't know how to go about solving them.

So we needed to help them with a solution to that problem, and that's when we switched to -- we turned to Juran and Juran Institute, and they were extremely helpful in that regard. Because not only did you provide all the information. I think they were in terms of videotapes with Joe Juran who, in our view, was a -- was the if not the most

recognized leader in this whole movement in America, if not in the world.

and to have him on a tape explaining all of this, and that we could then take the tapes and ship them around to various parts of Motorola, that, to us, was a very significant something to us. And it worked out very well.

Now, from our perspective, another aspect of this thing which made it exciting -- of course, not only was he shipable in the form of tapes, which are very convenient, they came in multi-languages. And since we are, you know, a world-wide corporation, this was particularly helpful to us.

So he recognized -- he, Joe Juran, recognized so many of the needs that would be required for people who were pursuing quality improvement programs, and he made them available to us.

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And that's why we finally ended up by -- I guess we had a trademarking arrangement of something or other, worked out in the early days, so that we could take all the information that they provided and our people could copy it at will and disseminate it throughout Motorola -- if I remember the details correctly.

Q: There are companies to this day who are reluctant to move into a quality effort, whether it's Juran or anybody else; because they believe that the costs are overwhelming to step into the process, and they're unsure as what the potential returns are going to be. What would you say to a company that, to this day, says, oh, how much am

I going to have to commit and what can I hope to get back on it?

GERMAIN: I would say those are groundless fears. That's smoke. These are ghosts that should disappear from the closet.

First of all, our experience is an investment of large amounts of money is uncalled for. If you're going to make an improvement in a company, making large investments is not improving the company, it's increasing the investment.

And, therefore, it makes it much more necessary that the company earn more money to support the investment. It makes the ... worse, et cetera, et cetera.

It's the wrong way to go. And our experience is it doesn't happen that way. If we were to look at our own financial base and look where we made heavy investments to get quality improvement going at Motorola, we'd be hard pressed to find anything very significant.

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It is true, from time to time, that you have to take an old process or an old piece of machinery and throw it out and replace it with something. But in terms of the totality of a large company, or any company, in the amount it invests in -- whether it's in capital or new processes and what have you -- you're hard pressed to find it.

And that's not the approach anyway.

Q: Under your leadership, for every dollar that

Motorola spent specifically on quality improvement, what kind of a multiple did you get back from the time you initiated through your Baldrige Award in --

GERMAIN: Eight -- 1988.

Q: Did you get back \$2 for every dollar invested? Three dollars?

GERMAIN: I don't have those exact numbers, but I would say two-to-one or five-to-one is grossly understated. Grossly understated. I would think that you'd probably be looking at least 50 to 100-to-one return as a minimum. I know the company espouses numbers like we have saved \$2 billion in the period from 1987, I think it is, to 1990. Something like that.

And \$2 billion is an awful lot of money. And there's still at least another billion out there, for sure, to be found. So we're talking of very large numbers, in terms of what can be saved. And the investment is really -- it really is not an investment.

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The whole issue is, hey, take whatever operations you have, with the processes that make up all the operations, and run them better. Make them, you know, defect free. Don't make mistakes.

When you start doing all of those things, takes less time to do things, there are less mistakes to cover. Costs improve. Everything gets better. A company gets better. Investment, instead of going up, goes down. And return can be

enormous.

Now, whether the company elects to put it in profit or take the gain and put it -- invest in some other areas, obviously that's something up to the management to decide. But it's really a very significant return.

Q: Bob Galvin said his belief was that Motorola is capable of doing everything to a level of perfection. Which sounds like an intimidating goal. How realistic is doing everything perfectly?

GERMAIN: I believe that is Y.5:Y realistic. And I come from, what, almost 40 years of experience at Motorola. I grew up as an engineer in design. I designed a lot of products that went out into the field and had early failures in the field. Latent defects, as we call them.

I designed product that had reliability situations in the field. Not intentionally, obviously. And I have lived through all of that. And I say, well, to design something perfectly, that's impossible.

At least if I go back to the days of the early defect -- the zero defect program, I think it was called, in about the mid-60's or so. I never liked that program because I thought,

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hey, what we ought to do is do perfect work and we'll get rid of all these problems.

And in those days, they say, how can you do perfect work? Well, the answer is: well, if you take what you have today and you look at what you're going to do tomorrow or next week or the week

after, it isn't going to be perfect.

'But, as an ultimate goal, it is really a very realistic one, because perfection now is being defined by the customer.

We at Motorola say: customer satisfaction is the whole issue. Okay. And if you can satisfy customers perfectly, then you have achieved whatever it is to be accomplished.

In many areas today, in terms of product performance -- if you will -- we have reached zero defects. The customer cannot perceive of problem at all, in that aspect of it.

Now, there may be other areas, whether it's in billing or how we represent -- how our sales people or the people who interface with the customer represent themselves may be less than perfect, et cetera, et cetera. How timely we are with certain kinds of information.

But as a -- as a goal, I think it's quite practical. And that's something we all have -- we have to do more and more here at Motorola. And I'm certain that's true throughout the world, is deal with that as a practical something.

It is really practical. If you look at it in -- in how you -- what is the definition of zero defects.

Q: Would you finish this: Joe Juran is -- ?

GERMAIN: Joe Juran is probably one of the most eminent quality gurus -- if I may use that expression -- in the world. There are few people like him, in terms of -- of what

respect and esteem that the annals that have traveled throughout Motorola, and being to many industry situations. He is a most revered individual.

Q: We know that Joe Juran feels an enormous debt that his whole life has been paying back to society. What do you think society should thank Joe Juran for?

GERMAIN: Well, I suppose to get back to the same issue. This whole -- the whole issue of making America more competitive, which is a vital thing to our economy these days. I would think he played a very important role in that.

Providing the -- the inspiration and certainly a lot of the knowledge to help people like myself recognize what can be done, and what should be done, and then moving forward on this whole issue of corporate competitiveness, and dealing with the global nature of competition.

I think is a very important -- very, very important issue.

Q: That's an extraordinary answer, and it would be better if the name Joe Juran appears someplace.

GERMAIN: Forgive me. Repeat the question.

Q: What should society be thankful for to Joe Juran?

GERMAIN: Well, I think society should thank Joe

Juran for the role he played in providing the leadership, the know ledge -- if you will.

And making these things available to people like myself, who can then interface with a corporation like Motorola. My

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role again at Motorola, is as a catalyst -- if you will -- is to deal with the issue of competitiveness, not only in America, in the world, and to improve the competitiveness of corporations like America.

Q: Motorola is reputed to be the only company in America who gained back an important market once the Japanese had taken it way. What role, if any, did Joe Juran have in helping Motorola recapture this segment of the electronics market from the Japanese?

GERMAIN: Which market are you talking about?

Q: Which one did you -- chips? Transistors?

GERMAIN: Probably chips. That's probably a recent-- that's a recent phenomenon. I'm not familiar with that one.

Q: It might be better stated that we're one of a handful of companies that have been successful penetrating the Japanese market, as opposed to recapturing something ...

GERMAIN: Yeah. I don't think we talk about it

like that.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

Q: This program, hopefully, will go on public broadcasting. Why should station managers of public broadcasting television stations have an interest in presenting a program on the life of Joe Juran, who's clearly not Cary

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Grant or John Wayne? Why should viewers in America know about Joseph Juran?

GERMAIN: Well, I think Joseph Juran was a very significant person in providing leadership, knowledge, and guidance in what America should do in dealing with this growing competitive situation that we have in America, and throughout the world.

We have seen it in a number of areas, here at Motorola, where, as a result of what we learned in our association with him and the Juran Institute, we have implemented, at Motorola, and have made significant improvements and have become much more competitive than we used to be.

There are many examples of this. The ones that come to mind is I remember -- and I was personally involved with this one. It had to do with selling pocket pagers, the beepers -- if you will -- that people carry around with them all the time. And trying to sell them into Japan, where we were not exactly welcome -- if you will.

And that was somewhat of a tedious

proposition, but we persevered, and thanks to the number of things that we learned in the process, from people like Joe Juran, we were successful.

And today, I believe the records are still true, that we have the largest share of the Japanese market -- the market being Nippon Telephone and Telegraph -- in Japan. And it's shared with five other Japanese companies.

I think there's also a case to be made for cellular telephone. Where we've been in the telephon~ business, mobile telephone business, for many, many years, and we

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came out with the cellular phone. ~ made a giant step forward in terms of issues of quality and reliability.

And this all comes from the teachings of a Joe Juran, and he has contributed much in what we see in society. And it all gets back to this issue of competitiveness~we, at Motorola, are much more competitive than we used to be. And we'll continue to grow and become more competitive.
~ I think it's a very good thing for America, and it's a very good thing for the whole world. And Joe Juran has -- made a major contribution in that ar~

Q: *Thank you.*

(END OF TAPE 7)

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