

EYES

JUST THE FACTS

The application of the self-reliance, essence and economy (SEE) principle can help guide leaders of organizations to achieve better results by

examining specific business activities or key performance indicators and making necessary adjustments.

this way of thinking and acting until it becomes part of the organization's culture of quality.

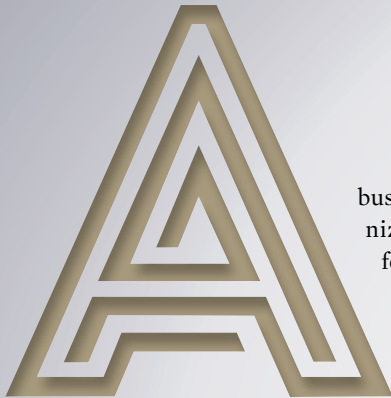
In fact, the SEE principle should be followed by all team members to incorporate

A leader can be most productive and effective if he or she applies the Pareto principle and the SEE principle in tandem.

SEE what applying a new quality principle focused on organizational culture can do by Yves Van Nuland and Grace L. Duffy

WIDE OPEN

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business entity that's part of a category referred to as "all organizations of the public sector" (AOPS)¹ provides many services for its citizens and organizations. The entity also can provide diverse services to fellow AOPS. This is a similar arrangement to private companies in which business-to-business as well as business-to-consumer arrangements are deployed.

An AOPS can achieve better results, however, through the interaction of an AOPS leader and citizens. This is an essential part of the Society & Active Citizenship (SAC) model.² Not only does this help the AOPS improve, but the entire society and country can progress. The SAC model indicates how well the country or region is managed.

This interaction is more effective when the self-reliance, essence and economy (SEE) principle is applied (Figure 1). To make it work, however, every AOPS leader must systematically apply the following three simple values, reflected in the following questions:

1. **Self-reliance**—To what extent is a business decision contributing to the increased self-reliance of the citizens and organizations, thus, only rarely resulting in subsidies given to citizens or companies?
2. **Essence**—To what extent are the business activities and corresponding key performance indicators (KPI) essential to and within the scope of the AOPS?
3. **Economy**—To what extent are all business activities executed economically? Is the procedure or process too complex? Can it be simplified? For example, has *kaizen* been applied systematically?
If the answer to any of the areas is negative, the leader should redesign or delete that activity or KPI.

You'll have a constructive organizational culture if the self-reliance, essence and economy (SEE) principle is systematically applied in daily life.

Responsible citizenship

Responsible citizenship refers to third parties providing feedback on the initiatives and results of the AOPS leaders. This means that citizens can provide feedback³ on one or more KPIs on the AOPS website, for example. A learning cycle always consists of the four steps of the Shewhart (plan-do-check-act) cycle:

- **Plan**—A leader sets a goal. He or she starts by formulating and describing the goal. Next, he or she designs the indicator.

FIGURE 1

SEE principle



Self-reliance

Essence

Economy

- **Do**—He or she posts this KPI and the ensuing results obtained on the organization's website.
- **Check**—The citizenship provides feedback. After, it is up to the KPI owner to take appropriate measures.
- **Act**—The leader decides how much of the feedback he or she can use to adjust the KPI. This systematic feedback allows the KPI owner to make progress simply and pragmatically.

If the leader does not consider the feedback, he or she must explain what has been decided or changed in the next KPI update (perhaps one month later). The feedback can consist of suggestions for improvement, additions, questions, arguments why something is incorrect, references or benchmarks, for example. Thus, this feedback can be different depending on the specific KPI.

Thanks to the interaction between AOPS leaders and the citizenry, not only does the AOPS benefit (better results), but the entire society can benefit. In the end, both AOPS leaders and the citizens have applied the SEE principle.

SEE principle

By applying the three fundamental values of SEE, the leader can achieve a lot. With each part of the SEE acronym, the leader can explain why this activity or KPI is important. When this is done by everyone daily, this way of thinking and acting becomes part of the organizational culture. The interpretation of these three parts of the SEE principle will be different from AOPS to AOPS.

The following example shows why self-reliance, essence and economy are important to every member within an AOPS.

Self-reliance:

- You will not need constant support or subsidies.
- You are proud of what you have achieved with your own hands and resources, and on your own initiative.

- You become an independent thinker and actor, and you realize you're getting things done.
- You don't do things because you believe you must please someone who gives you money or resources. You do things because they contribute to the essence of your work.

Essence:

- You can simplify things until you get to the point. All ballast goes overboard. This also allows you to achieve more with limited resources.
- You consciously eliminate activities that do not add value to a process, and you focus on the activities that create *real* added value.
- You can maintain focus and set priorities easily.
- You don't lose sight of the forest for the trees. You do not concentrate on one tree (details), but on the forest (the whole).
- You spend most of your time, resources (budget and personnel, for example) and investments on core tasks and strategic goals.

Economy:

- You achieve more with the same resources.
- You don't engage in unnecessary or luxurious expenses. This leaves enough money for the necessary investments to ensure future activities.
- You can achieve this by applying methods and strategies of continuous improvement—that is, *kaizen*.
- You actively combat the fragmentation of resources.

The following example shows resource fragmentation. There were multiple permit offices for counties within the St. John's Water Management District in central Florida. Instead of having the overhead for several county water permitting functions (for example, permits for digging wells into the central Florida aquifer), all are issued by a single office that manages the regional water management district.

Previously, central Floridians wanting to dig irrigation or potable wells on their property had to work with their municipality, county and regional water management authority to obtain permission to sink the well. To reduce fragmentation, municipal water departments now direct requests for well drilling approval automatically to the water management authority, thus saving turnaround time for issuing the permit.

IOE DATA

CHANGE, CULTURE ONGOING CONCERNS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Achieving and sustaining organizationwide quality excellence is a difficult challenge, but developing and maintaining these initiatives during a completely unprecedented global pandemic is beyond complex.

As ASQExcellence (ASQE) builds upon the Insights on Excellence (IoE) research with the publication of its second IoE Executive Brief, it's clear that the challenges faced by organizations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have changed significantly from those seen from 2017–2020. The data in the IoE reports show that implemented solutions suddenly need change and a fresh perspective.

When asked what challenges their organizations faced in adapting quality programs to meet the need of the entire workforce, data show there was a growing concern in 2021 about international quality standards being higher than local standards. This change is the third most-selected challenge among quality professionals (33%) and executives (32%), but it was not a top selection originally indicated in 2020. The second most-selected challenge for both groups is that quality remains a culturally sensitive issue for the workforce (37%).

⊕ **The maturing IoE research proves a significant shift emerged in the priority of challenges initially seen in 2020. As organizations increasingly focus on advancing a culture of quality-based practices, ASQE organizational membership can help with customizable levels to fit any organization, giving your team the benefits, tools and resources it needs to build a culture of quality. Visit asq.org/membership/organization for more information.**

⊕ **To support ASQE's mission, the 2021 ASQE IoE Executive Brief is free to ASQ and ASQE members at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8px4ky>. To learn more about the IoE suite of research, visit insightsonexcellence.org.**

The application of the SEE principle applies just as well to the managerial and nonexecutive AOPS leader as it does to the citizens who formulate feedback. For lobbyists, this principle could pose an additional challenge. Public interest takes precedence over individual interest, and long-term goals take precedence over short-term goals.

By providing feedback, many citizens will gain an active interest in the functioning of the AOPS. The public's confidence in political and government apparatus will increase when the citizens notice that their feedback is considered useful by the AOPS leaders. Consequently, the results will improve further.

This is the opposite of what is happening in the United States and western Europe today. The application of the SEE principle creates conditions in which populists and lobbyists can no longer capitalize on driving individual interests at the expense of the greater community.

The SEE principle can be applied not only to activities, but also to the KPIs used to measure the effectiveness of the activities. Often, we find that leaders are using KPIs that do not help deliver or improve the activity.

Applying the SEE principle incorrectly

Indeed, it is possible to misapply the SEE principle. For example, a nonprofit organization may create a vision, mission, policy, strategy and business plan, but management wants “to do everything.” The nonprofit, for example, looks to use the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs)⁴ of the United Nations as its own strategic plan. For each of these strategic goals, the organization forms one to three objectives and KPIs.

Attempting to address each of the 17 SDGs may be too much for a small organization. If this nonprofit organization employs only 100 people, some managers may not know where to start. They see only a lot of trees and no longer the woods. When the management team chooses only the three most important SDGs, for example, the whole becomes more manageable. This makes it easier to explain to all collaborators what is important and what must be prioritized. Additionally, it would be unusual if the organization in this example didn't have its own strategic objectives. It is difficult to believe that an organization only uses SDGs to drive its local vision.

Another incorrect application of SEE is the pursuit of perfectionism and being unable to distinguish main issues from side issues. For example, each KPI is linked to a core task and has a direct relationship with the organization's annual work plan (business plan) or the strategic plan. KPIs related to the achievement of the strategic objectives are managed by

the management team. The KPIs related to the core activities and key processes are managed by middle management. Effective senior leaders can distinguish between these two types of KPIs. Senior leaders manage “results KPIs” and not “activity KPIs.”⁵

Pareto + SEE = (Pareto)²

The Pareto principle is the 80/20 rule—that is, by spending 20% of your time or 20% of your resources, you can achieve 80% of the planned results. Leaders of an organization know they must focus on essential tasks. They do not need to control everything: They must monitor only 20% of all tasks if they are critical activities.⁶

You can apply the Pareto principle a second time. If an AOPS leader applies the SEE principle on each core activity, he or she will discover that only a small number of core activities are left that he or she must *monitor*.

Having done so, the leader becomes very efficient in his or her leadership approach. However, in observing some managers, the opposite is true. These managers try to control everything, which is, of course, impossible. This is typical in a defensive organizational culture.

Organizational culture

You’ll have a constructive organizational culture⁷ if the SEE principle is systematically applied in daily life. Characteristics of a constructive organizational culture include:

- You are proud of what you have achieved with your own hands, your own resources and on your own initiative.
- You are independent in thinking, acting and getting things done.
- Things are done because they contribute to the essence of the activities.
- People distinguish the important from the unimportant and act accordingly.
- Focus and setting priorities are easily maintained.

A leader can be most productive (in achieving better results) and effective (doing the right things) if he or she applies the Pareto principle and the SEE principle in tandem. **QP**

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The focus of the Society & Active Citizenship (SAC) model is the management of a country or region. There are two categories addressed. One is the general government and agencies that report directly to politicians (for example, governors, ministers and mayors). Examples are governmental organizations, such as ministries, agencies, departments, and regional and local organizations such as counties, cities, fire departments and police stations. The second category includes public service organizations, such as public schools, public universities, not-for-profit organizations, public-private partnerships and government contractors such as defense and social service suppliers. The latter category consists

of organizations that depend on taxpayer funding for at least 50% of their budgets through direct payments or grants. When the public sector is referred to in this article, we are always referring to both categories. Public service organizations can be classified based on a variety of criteria, such as task, ownership structure, legal status, degree of autonomy, financing and budget structure, distribution of financial surpluses or “publicness.” When the organization is more than 50% dependent on tax or social services funding, we call it a public sector organization. This article refers to these entities as “all organizations of the public sector (AOPS).”

2. Yves Van Nuland and Grace Duffy, “How to Successfully Develop and Manage a Sustainable Country or Region,” *Quality Management Forum*, Vol. 47, No. 3, Fall 2021, <https://my.asq.org/communities/files/28/9128>.
3. The model can only be successful if two parties actively fulfill their respective roles. On one hand, the politicians, civil servants and leaders of AOPS, and on the other hand the citizens. We call the latter third parties. These persons could be colleagues of other AOPSS, professors, persons from companies, retirees, students, consultants and persons from different lobbying groups. These third parties can offer feedback on the key performance indicators of the leaders of the AOPS.
4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The 17 Goals,” <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
5. Yves Van Nuland and Grace L. Duffy, “KPI Management,” www.comatech.be/kpi-management.
6. Richard Koch, *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret of Achieving More With Less*, Doubleday, 1998.
7. Human Synergistics, www.humansynergistics.com.



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