

Animation 9.2

Managing quality can be very challenging as there are many ways in which customers' needs and the product or service provided by an organization can differ.

Originally developed in 1985 for customer processing operations, the five gap model of quality is equally applicable to materials processing operations and identifies where deficiencies in the quality of operations can occur.

The first gap is the positioning gap between management perceptions of what customers expect and those expectations themselves. This could occur if the initial contact with the customer was not followed up by a written specification agreement.

The second gap is the specification gap between management perceptions of what customers expect and the product or service specified. It is not uncommon for this to occur if organizations believe that a customer's stated quality standards are unrealistic or the cost of achieving those standards would be too high.

The third gap is the delivery gap between the product or service promised and that actually delivered. Misunderstanding capacity constraints or simply not allowing enough time in the process can lead to this gap.

The fourth gap is the communication gap between the product or service actually delivered and that communicated to the customer. This is when the advertising and promotional information do not match that received by the customer.

The fifth gap is the perception gap between the product or service perceived and that expected by the customer. This is perhaps the most difficult to manage. Customer perceptions can be built from many different areas and it is difficult for the operations manager to 'second guess' these.