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Lone Star Enhances the Customer Experience with a **Focus on Process**

Increasing complexity in the AV industry is driving integrators to look at process

A focus on process has not always been necessary for success, but it has long been a priority at Lone Star Communications. Ray Bailey, CEO, and Patt Bowles, Chief Customer Experience Officer, share their thoughts on the company's attention to process and how this drives customer satisfaction.

Lone Star has been ISO 9001 certified for 15 years, which is a rare achievement for an integrator. The ISO 9001:2015 standard is based on a number of quality management principles, including a strong customer focus, a process approach and continual improvement.

"We took this on because quality and customer satisfaction have always been the driving forces at Lone Star," says Bowles. "It isn't just some logo we use. We want our customers to be ridiculously happy with the outcome and feel like we are absolutely in it for them, which we are. So, we are always updating procedures to improve the customer experience."

Keep the focus on the processes, not the people

"We want the processes to be the focus, not 'Hey, Mr. Installer you didn't do this right,'" says Bowles. "If they didn't do it right, was it because we haven't clearly articulated the process and followed up? What is the issue?"

This approach takes all the finger pointing off of people. *"It is better to improve the processes, and keep the focus on them,"* reports Bowles. *"This makes for a happier employee, and it makes for a higher quality product, which is always our goal."*

In the last 6 months, all of Lone Star's trainers started the Six Sigma Lean Green Belt Certification program. *"This fits right in with our ISO certification,"* Bowles explains. *"It gives us a more formalized platform to use when we go out to our customers to do a Process Walk. Our trainers do this to evaluate efficiencies and help our customers have a better experience as a clinician or as an educator."*

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Q360 provides one view of the customer

Often, process improvement is done without having a true understanding of the current process. A Process Walk helps everyone see the processes at the same time, across all functions, which helps build mutual understanding around process issues. When everyone looks at the processes together, it can be easier to reach agreement, and build consensus to implement change.

Solutions360 helps keep the focus on process

Lone Star went live with Q360 in 2017. *“I was so excited for Q360,”* says Bowles. *“I wanted a platform that went across the entire company, starting with the initial customer contact, all the way through the sales process, engineering, operations and service. That kind of continuity is important, so that at any time, we can go back and look at the entire history for a customer, or facility.”*

Prior to implementation, Solutions360 conducted an in depth needs assessment. According to Bailey, *“They came in and talked to us about all our processes, how we did things, and how Q360 would impact workflows.”*

“That’s exactly what we go through with our customers every day,” says Bailey. *“We look at their processes and their goals. Then we look at how we can improve those processes through a needs analysis, by talking with all the staff and going through their daily steps and routines.”*

The Solutions360 needs assessment is very much like the Process Walk that Lone Star goes through when onboarding new clients

“When the Solutions360 team came through the door, they did the exact same thing with us and it was so déjà vu; we thought, ‘wow, this is perfect,’” according to Bailey. *“I think they were surprised by how detailed we were already within the company, and that Q360 would fit perfectly with our business. But because we are audited every year, we have our ducks in a row more so than many typical integrators that Solutions360 works with.”*

As an added value, by understanding what it feels like to be on the customer side of a needs assessment, it has made Lone Star better as an integrator. *“Now we have been able to improve the onboarding procedure for our customers,”* according to Bailey.

Bowles confirms that the needs assessment was critical. *“Solutions360’s prep ahead of time was essential for as smooth a flow as possible with existing projects coming into Q360. This was important so that we wouldn’t lose money, lose customer satisfaction, or lose our minds during the implementation,”* says Bowles. *“There is no way the implementation could have been even half way successful if it was just launched with a ‘Here’s the product, let’s import your data, and get going with the online tutorials’ approach.”*

The focus on process is paying off, as Lone Star’s recurring customer satisfaction ratings range from 98% to 100%

“More and more, our customers want to see a physical representation of the value they receive,” Bowles reports. *“Through Q360, we are able to document every time we deal with a customer. If we talk on the phone, we document what we talked about. Or maybe one of our trainers went to a site for a walkthrough; or perhaps there was a call to the service department, and the service department walked them through something that saves a service call.”*

Lone Star documents this information for each customer site. *“When they ask us to show what we’ve done for the quarter, we just print out the report and send it to them,”* Bowles explains. *“The report is a thing of beauty. We don’t have to compile the data, put it into a spreadsheet, or reformat. It is so easy, and that is really awesome.”*

“Our customers know they like us, and feel like we are doing a great job, but this makes them feel like we are partners,” Bowles concludes.