



**Keynote speaker:**  
Patricia Solarin (Mrs.)  
Chief Consultant  
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She has working experience in ISO (the International Organization for Standardization's) since 1994, almost 30 years since the inception of the Quality System Certification Scheme launched by the Standards Organisation of Nigeria and UNIDO in Nigeria. Her management systems certification spans across small and large organizations in diverse sectors. And she has managed up to 48 installations to ISO CERTIFICATION and currently maintaining about 8 of these. She is a management team member of the Society of Management Systems Practitioners of Nigeria (MASPAN).

## **Greetings !**

Good morning, everyone! Or should I say, Good morning, Nigeria's future quality champions!

It is such a pleasure to be part of this groundbreaking event -Quality 4.5 Summit. Looking out there, I see not just faces, but the future of Nigerian enterprise — both from the bustling markets of Lagos to the elegant corridors of our government agencies in Abuja and across Nigeria.

Speaking of elegance and stature, I must acknowledge the presence of some of our distinguished guests today, whether in person or ably represented are:

Director-General of SON, Dr. Ifeanyi Chukwunonso Okeke, welcome to SON, the true stalwart in standardizing our nation's potential. Thank you for supporting this event.



To the head of FCCPC, Mr. Babatunde Irukera, whose mission it is to ensure we all get the best and safest of everything we consume. By the way, thanks to you, I now inspect everything I buy with a magnifying glass. Just in case!

And of course, the National Coordinator/CEO of SERVICOM, Mrs. Nnenna Akajemeli. Ensuring our public services run smoothly and efficiently. If only you could help streamline the line at my favorite bus stop in Ikeja!

To our chief host, the Chairman of the Board of the Quality Improvement Institute of Nigeria – QIIN – Dr. Umar Musa. Thank you for the welcome address it made me feel more relaxed. And to Dr. Stephen Hati, President/CEO and your team at QIIN for putting together this innovative program for our dear country Nigeria.

To all other dignitaries, esteemed guests, and especially to every single participant here – you are the reason we are here. You are the heartbeat of Nigeria's quality journey.

Now, let us embark on a trek – a quality trek! Let us go into how quality management is not just about standards on paper, but it' is about evolving through sharing experiences, and transforming both our local businesses and grand government halls to become better every day.

### **Harnessing Decades of Quality Leadership for Businesses in Nigeria**

Obviously, I need not introduce myself any further as the MC has done a great job of making me feel international.

And Yes, I have taken over 48 companies/establishments successfully through the system's installation of Quality Management System to Certification to the current Standard of the time. These include the recertification of some of the companies against the current reviewed and republished ISO 9001 and 14001. Back then, the ISO 9001 Standard was reviewed and republished at an interval of five years.



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You might be wondering, why am I so passionate about quality management? Well, it is not just about getting a shiny ISO 9001 certificate to hang on your wall. It is about the transformative stories behind each of those certifications. Stories of growth, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

So, what is on our menu today? First, we will demystify the concepts of growth, competitiveness, and customer satisfaction — digging deeper than textbook definitions. We will then traverse the unique landscape of Nigeria, examining both our private enterprises and public establishments. And trust me, there are some fascinating tales to tell.

I will share some personal anecdotes from my experiences, and of course, we cannot ignore the economic dynamics at play, especially the inflation challenge we face in Nigeria. We will also prep the stage for our esteemed regulators who will delve deeper into their pivotal roles in our country's quality journey.

So, without further ado, let us get right in and, hopefully, by the end of this session, you will see quality management in a whole new light!

### **Understanding The Terms in The Theme**

You see, when we toss around words like 'business', 'growth', 'competitiveness', and 'customer satisfaction', they often sound like corporate jargon. But today, we are going to unpack them and understand their true essence.

And of course, the word **business** refers to every organization (a person or group of people), transacting for profit or maintaining the order of governance.

**'Growth':** "When I say 'growth', what comes to your mind? Numbers on a spreadsheet? Increasing sales? Well, that is just the tip of the iceberg. Growth is more than just numbers. It is about expanding our horizons — not just in profits or customer base but in our capacity to



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innovate, our capability to deliver, and our influence in the market. And for our public servants, it is about making our government establishments more efficient and responsive to the needs of the Nigerian people. Think of it as the branches of a tree reaching out in every direction, not just upwards!"

**'Competitiveness':** "Now, competitiveness. It is not just about being the best in the room. In the vast expanse of Nigerian businesses and agencies, it is about standing out, offering that little extra, and always being a step ahead. Whether you are a tech startup in Yaba or a government agency in Yobe, Yenagoa, how are you ensuring that you are not just part of the crowd but leading the parade?"

**'Customer Satisfaction':** "Lastly, but certainly not least, is consumer or customer satisfaction. This is not just about making people happy for a moment. It is about building a fortress of trust, consistently meeting expectations, and turning occasional customers into lifelong advocates. And remember, for our public agencies, your 'customers' are our fellow Nigerians. They are not just looking for a service; they are looking for an experience, an assurance that their country values and prioritizes their needs.

So, as we delve deeper today, I want us to think beyond the traditional definitions of these terms and truly grasp their essence in the Nigerian context.

### **Customer Service Stats That Matter:**

Before we proceed let us quickly look some important customer service stats that matter:

- For Every One Customer Complaint, There are 26 More Unhappy But Silent Customers
- 96% of Unhappy Customers Do not Complain, but 91% of Those Will Simply Leave
- 13% of Unsatisfied Customers Tell More than 20 People



- 70% of Buying Experiences Based on How a Customer Feels They Are Treated
- So, the BIG question is: **How can businesses leverage these numbers to improve your customer engagement leading to satisfaction?**

### **The Nigerian Landscape – Business and Beyond**

Now that we have set our foundational terms and basic customer service stats, let us paint a picture of the vibrant, ever-evolving landscape of Nigeria. A land of boundless potential, teeming with entrepreneurs, public servants, and driven citizens.

With over 40 million registered micro, small and medium enterprises and nearly 100,000 new businesses in 2020 alone, Nigeria is a bubbling cauldron of ambition and innovation. Yet, here is a staggering fact: out of all these businesses, less than a thousand have the ISO 9001 certification by SON. There's potential, but there's also room for quality elevation.

But remember, it is not just about the private sector. Our government agencies, some of which proudly flaunt the ISO 9001 certification, play an equally vital role in shaping Nigeria's future. Their commitment to quality directly impacts the lives of millions.

Now, layer this with the current economic conditions, notably our 25% inflation rate. It is not just a statistic. It directly influences how businesses and government bodies operate, the cost of goods, the purchasing power of the average Nigerian, and most importantly, the quality of products and services delivered.

In this complex scenario, quality management is not a luxury; it is a necessity. For private businesses, it is the gateway to sustainable growth and consumer trust. And for our government establishments, it's about serving Nigerians efficiently, ensuring they get the best value and experience from public services.



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So, as we delve into the intricate hop between quality and growth, let us keep this diverse Nigerian landscape in mind. Because quality management in Nigeria is not just a textbook theory, it is a living, breathing journey of continuous improvement.

### **The ISO 9001 Certification – A Universal Standard**

The ISO 9001 is more than just a collection of numbers and letters; it is a universal testament to quality. But what makes it so special? And why should Nigerian enterprises and government agencies strive for it?

Let me mention here that it is not about the certification, as I mentioned earlier but about its implementation. So, organizations can set out to use it without necessarily focusing on the certification.

However, let us commend those who have already achieved this certification. It is no small feat. Whether it is a bustling private business or a government agency tirelessly working to elevate public service, this certification is a badge of honor (NOT PERFECTION), reflecting a commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

Out of the numerous businesses and establishments in Nigeria, a select few have achieved this hallmark of excellence. It is not just about compliance; it is about setting a standard, a benchmark that says, 'We deliver the best, consistently.'

But what is in it for them? Well, for private businesses, ISO 9001 can lead to increased customer trust, operational efficiency, and a significant competitive advantage in the market. It is like having a gold star on your report card.

And for our government agencies, it is even more profound. Achieving this certification means that they are committed to providing public services that are efficient, reliable, and consistently



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meet the needs and expectations of Nigerians. In a sense, it is a promise — a promise of excellence and accountability.

The transformative power of this certification lies in its ability to shift mindsets. It is not about paperwork or ticking off boxes; it is about embracing a culture of quality, where every process, every decision, every interaction is aimed at achieving excellence.

So think about this certification or at least the applications of the framework, not as an end but as a beacon, guiding both our private and public sectors towards a brighter, more quality-driven future.

### **My Experiences with Both Sectors**

Close to 3 decades now, I have had the privilege of working with diverse organizations — from spirited startups to dedicated service delivery businesses. Each had its unique story, its challenges, and its moments of triumph. Allow me to take you on a brief journey through some of these narratives.

First, let us talk about a manufacturing company I worked with. Bright minds with game-changing ideas. They believed in their product, but there was one challenge: consistency. During our ISO 9001 journey, we realized the need for a structured quality management system. It was a challenging transition – shifting from a flexible mindset to a more process-driven approach. But the results? Astounding! They did not just improve in product quality but also in team collaboration and customer satisfaction.

On the other end of the spectrum, I recall a government agency. The perception was that 'things move slowly in the public sector'. But I witnessed passion and dedication that was second to none. The main challenge here was navigating bureaucracy and aligning diverse departments under a unified quality goal. However, once they achieved the ISO 9001 certification, not only did their internal processes streamline, but the public's trust in them skyrocketed.



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But here is the thing. Whether private or public, the challenges faced were often more human than procedural — the resistance to change, the fear of the unknown, the comfort of 'this is how we've always done it'. The variations of each sector are different, but the essence of quality management remains consistent.

Whatever the organization or business the stories are many. Successes to be proud of and challenges that became stepping stones. My journey has shown me that with commitment, resilience, and a shared vision, quality is achievable and transformative for everyone involved.

I hope these stories serve as a testament to the power of persistence, adaptability, and the relentless pursuit of excellence.

### **Synergizing Quality Across Nigeria**

Now, while each sector has its variations, imagine a Nigeria where the principles of quality management weave a thread of cohesion, creating a tapestry of mutual growth for both private and public sectors. Sounds dreamy, right? But it is achievable.

Let us start with the simple principle: **customer focus**, at its core, it emphasizes the importance of understanding and meeting the current and future needs of customers. This principle recognizes that organizations depend on their customers, and therefore should align their objectives and strategies to meet customer requirements and exceed customer expectations. Do you know your customer? Beyond just the KYC stuff!

Another principle is improvement. In the private sector, this could mean refining product quality, streamlining processes, or enhancing customer interactions. For our government agencies, it translates to more efficient public services, quicker response times, and heightened accountability.





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Now, imagine these two sectors not just operating in their silos but learning from each other. A private enterprise could adopt best practices from a government agency that excels in community engagement. Conversely, a public agency might glean insights from a business's innovative approach to process efficiency. Hence the need for partnership.

Again, the principle of engagement of people or stakeholder engagement. Businesses thrive on customer feedback. Similarly, government agencies can and should actively seek citizens' feedback. This shared commitment to listening and adapting is what will bridge the perceived gap between the sectors.

### **Quality Management Core (ISO 9000)**

Just to elaborate a bit about the core of quality management– the Quality Improvement Institute of Nigeria (QIIN) and the Society of Management Systems Practitioners of Nigeria (MASPAN) are providing detailed courses on these and I urge you all to take advantage of it.

But the true synergy emerges when we realize that the growth and competitiveness of private businesses directly impact the nation's economy, while the efficiency and responsiveness of government agencies affect the lives and well-being of every Nigerian.

So briefly, the core of quality management revolves around establishing a policy to manage quality and get it to work through:

- Planning: setting quality objectives,
- Assurance: providing confidence
- Control: fulfilling quality requirements, and
- Improvement or what is commonly referred to as the continuous improvement process, which is aimed at increasing the ability to fulfil quality requirements.

So, as we contemplate our roles in this shared journey, let us envision a Nigeria where private businesses and government agencies walk hand-in-hand, each elevating the other, together



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championing the core of quality management, growth, out-pacing competition and imparting unparalleled satisfaction for all customer.

### **Addressing the Economic Elephant – Inflation**

"When discussing quality management in our current economic scenario, we simply can't sidestep the elephant in the room – the soaring inflation rate of about 25.8% (NBS, August 2023). It is a challenge, yes, but it is also an opportunity. Let us consider it closely!

Inflation, as we know, impacts purchasing power, drives up costs, and introduces uncertainties. The instinctive reaction of many businesses and agencies might be to cut corners, reduce costs wherever possible, and perhaps even compromise on quality. However, this approach is short-sighted.

Quality management provides a different perspective. Instead of compromising quality, it shows us ways to optimize, to streamline, and to deliver value in the face of economic headwinds.

Firstly, effective quality management can help organizations identify inefficiencies — processes that are redundant or wasteful. By eliminating these inefficiencies, organizations can offset some of the cost pressures that arise due to inflation.

Then there is the competitive advantage. In challenging economic times, consumers and stakeholders become even more discerning about where they spend. Quality becomes a distinguishing factor. Those who maintain, or even elevate their quality standards, are more likely to win consumer trust and loyalty.

Furthermore, a robust quality management system can offer better forecasting and risk management, allowing organizations to anticipate market changes, adjust their strategies proactively, and position themselves better in the face of economic challenges.



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And let us not forget, as costs rise, errors become even more expensive. Quality management, by reducing errors and rework, can offer substantial cost savings.

So, while inflation might seem like a daunting challenge, quality management provides the tools and strategies to navigate it. Instead of seeing it as a barrier, let us view it as a call to refine, to innovate, and to prove that, even in the face of adversity, excellence is achievable.

### **Regulators and Quality – Setting the Stage**

Now that we have navigated the waters of quality management from the perspective of businesses and economic challenges, it is time to discuss the unsung heroes of our journey: our regulators. They ensure that our compass stays true, guiding our efforts and championing the cause of quality, innovation, and consumer rights.

As a beginning point, we have the **Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)**. They play a pivotal role in fostering innovation, excellence, and instilling consumer confidence. Through dynamic standardization and certification, SON ensures that we do not just meet the minimum standards, but continually strive for excellence, raising the bar for businesses and public sectors alike.

Next, we have the **Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC)**. They wear the dual hats of ensuring businesses maintain a high standard of quality while also empowering you, the consumer, to demand and insist on top-tier products and services. They remind us that quality isn't a luxury; it's a right."

And finally, we will be hearing from **SERVICOM**. Their mission is close to my heart, as they focus on revolutionizing citizen satisfaction and sustainable development. By ensuring quality public services, they hold the torch that lights the path to a better Nigeria for every one of us.



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Together, these regulators make a formidable trio, each playing their distinct yet interconnected roles in the vast ensemble of quality management. Their presentations will offer deeper insights into their endeavors, and I'm excited for all of us to learn, interact, and understand the bigger picture they help paint.

So, without further ado, let us set the stage for our esteemed speakers from SON, FCCPC, and SERVICOM. Prepare to be enlightened, inspired, and reminded of the collaborative spirit that drives quality and excellence in Nigeria.

### **The Broader Impacts of Quality Management**

Having looked at the features of quality management, let us now take a step back and see the bigger picture – the ripple effects that embracing quality has on our communities, our public services, and our nation as a whole.

The core of quality management is not just about business profitability or operational efficiency. It is a commitment, a pledge, to better the lives of every Nigerian.

Imagine a local business that ensures every product meets the highest standards. Not only does this business thrive, but it also creates jobs, brings income to families, and contributes to the local economy. Over time, the entire community reaps the benefits, leading to local development, better infrastructure, and enhanced services.

Now, extend that to our government agencies. When they embrace quality, efficiency rises, wastage reduces, and public services, whether it is healthcare, education, or utilities, records marked improvements. This has direct implications for every Nigerian, making daily life smoother, more predictable, and ensuring that our rights as citizens are upheld.

As businesses grow, they pay taxes, engage in community development, and support local initiatives. Quality-driven businesses and government establishments act as pillars supporting



the community, fostering mutual growth, and ensuring that the wheels of our economy keep turning, even during challenges.

Ultimately, quality management is a catalyst. A catalyst that drives innovation, sustainability, and progress. A catalyst that ensures that Nigeria does not just participate in the global marketplace but stands tall, proud, and competitive.

So, when we speak about quality, remember, it is not just a business strategy. It is a roadmap to a brighter, more prosperous, and inclusive satisfying future for Nigeria.

### **A Call to Action**

Throughout this presentation, we have explored the landscapes of quality, its impacts, and an insight into the roles of our cherished regulators. But now, it is time to move from understanding to action.

With millions of MSMEs in Nigeria and several government establishments, it is starting to realize that less than a thousand have achieved the ISO 9001 certification by SON. While other certifying agencies exist, the numbers still tell a story - a story of untapped potential.

To every business leader, government official, and stakeholder here, I urge you to see quality certification not as a mere plaque on the wall, but as a commitment. A commitment to excellence, to growth, and to the future of Nigeria.

I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of this journey in many organizations in close to 3 decades now. The path may have challenges, but the rewards, in terms of growth, competitiveness, and stakeholder satisfaction, are immeasurable.



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And to our regulators, your role is more crucial than ever. By supporting, guiding, and encouraging businesses and agencies in their quality endeavors, you are shaping the future of our nation. A future of excellence, innovation, and trust.

Let us remember that collaboration is key. The private sector, public sector, and regulatory bodies must come together, share knowledge, resources, and best practices. Only together can we create a Nigeria that is synonymous with quality and excellence.

So, let this be our shared vision, our collective mission. Let us embark on this journey of quality, not just for our organizations but for our communities, our people, and our beloved nation. Let us act, elevate, and excel, together.

**Thank you!**