Case Notes

# Chapter 5: Managing for Quality

## Van Halen, Brown M&Ms, and Quality Control

## Case Summary

*This case describes how the rock band, Van Halen, used the presence of brown M&Ms in the backstage area as a visible signal to quality lapses of conformance to its performance specifications.*

Case Analysis *The case illustrates the challenges of service quality assurance. Managing service quality involves identifying perception gap between customers’ expectations and actual performance. However, both expectations and performance are based on intangibles that change over time which makes it difficult to measure and manage. The “no brown M&Ms” clause in Van Halen’s performance contract presents one way of overcoming such difficulty.*

## Sample Answers to Case Questions

1. Comment on the decision to use brown M&M’s as a safety check for the band’s performances. Does this seem a good way to verify quality to you? Why or why not?

The decision to use brown M&Ms as a safety check for the band’s performance is a simple and visible way to make sure all personnel involved understand and deliver the artists’ expectations and requirements of a quality performance. While it does not verify conformance of quality in areas such as equipment set-up, the “no brown M&Ms” provides an easy way to determine if the technical specifications of the contract had been thoroughly read and complied with.

2. Suppose you were just promoted to assistant manager at a local restaurant and as part of your duties, you are asked to improve basic food preparation and service delivery quality. Based on this case, how might you develop a quality test at the restaurant to verify that all necessary food preparation and safety procedures were being followed?

Two different quality management tools will be proposed to improve basic food preparation and service delivery quality of the restaurant. As food preparation procedures are orderly and specific, a Six Sigma program can be used to ensure its quality conformance. Service delivery, on the other hand, requires identifying service delivery performance gaps. One way to measure and manage these gaps is to monitor the time it takes for customers to receive their food order and compare that against the restaurant’s standard.