Quality IT Professionals should strive to be the Brand Ambassadors of Software Quality – A conceptual framework

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Abstract
Software Quality is a critical function in the Software Development Life Cycle. Talented professionals are needed to manage this critical function. For attracting and retaining good talent in the Quality profession, it is important that there is a good motivational and employee retention framework established. There are different factors that has an impact on employee-motivation like job security, interesting work & good working conditions, promotions & growth in the organization, appreciation by the supervisors for the work done etc. All these are good enablers for a positive work environment. However, a factor which would strongly aid the self esteem of an employee by way of brand ambassadorship is the key research area here, which can be rephrased as development of a motivational tool based on QUALITY AMBASSADORSHIP THEORY for the Quality Professionals in IT Industry

Keywords: Software Quality, Software Development Life Cycle. Quality Profession, Quality Ambassadorship Theory.

Introduction
Software Quality is currently rated as one of the most promising vertical in the IT Industry. This has been taking a back seat for quite some time. In the early years of IT boom, the outsourcing companies were merely focussed on meeting the functionality of the IT system. This had resulted in huge failure cost at customer sites. In the US, failure cost was estimated to a tune of $ 59.5 billion in 2002. Consequently a serious thought went into software Quality. The various techniques and models like six sigma, CMMI (Capabilities Maturity Model Integration) came into prominence which gave a focus on the process by which the software was developed. The technique stressed on detecting defects early, resulting in substantial reduction in failure cost at the customer end. Customer satisfaction came into focus by way of these models.

2. The problem and Objective of research

With Software Quality gaining importance in the last few years, the value of the professionals in this field also saw an encouraging trend. Job opportunities in this field surpassed the available resources. This resulted in an increase in attrition as Quality Professionals were flooded with lucrative offers. This posed a key challenge as the companies were keen on retaining the best & most desirable employees. Employee retention is critical to the long term health and success of any business. New dimensions of motivational techniques is the need of the hour.

Motivation can be best defined as the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals. There is an old saying that you can take a horse to the river, but it will drink only if it is thirsty, so is the case with the psychology of people. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist came up with the theory of motivation based on the human needs. The motivation process begins with needs or a deficiency. Behaviour of a human being is based on his or her current needs. The changing
needs would impact the behaviour. Thinking in these lines on the theory of motivation, Abraham Maslow established 5 stages of human needs (Fig 1). If we further analyze these stages, the esteem state in the hierarchy is more relevant for the professionals in IT Industry.

![Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs](image)

**Fig 1: Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

It is more relevant to establish a motivational strategy in esteem state for the IT professionals. This state represents the ego requirements of a professional. It could be successful in cajoling the ego state of individuals once or twice, but sustaining this state is a long drawn challenge.

3. **The research concept**

Contemplating on a solution covering various strata of management, it is a good thought of integrating the three dimensions of management, motivating through brand ambassadorship in quality arena. There is a culmination of branding, quality and motivation which forms the three dimensions.

4. **Analysis of the concept**

A brand is a product/organization that differentiates itself from other competitive offerings perceived by the marketplace. Brands are commonly perceived better at satisfying customer’s basic, social and psychological needs. Customers perceive brand as an assurance to quality and reliability. Brand Building of a product or company is the process of creating distinctive and durable perceptions in the minds of consumers. It is the name attached to a product or service and represents many more intangible benefits of the product or service. It can be a collection of feelings and perceptions about quality, image, lifestyle and status of the product or service. In the present day business scenario, “Brand” is more than just a business buzzword and has become the crux of selling in the new economy.

Employees are the best brand ambassadors of the company they represent. Associating the employees in the brand ambassadorship program is an effective means of empowering the employee and motivating them to get retained. The figure (Fig 2) depicts this transformation. Creating such a state in the quality arena could see Quality brand Ambassadorship for Professionals as an emerging motivational framework which sustains the cajoling of the ego state of professionals. To execute the brand ambassadorship program, the organization has to establish various platforms. These platforms should be in the public domain, where anyone in the IT Industry is open to participate.
5. An example based analysis

Consider the example of a conference of repute. There are a number of conferences in the quality arena like Quality Assurance International (QAI) International Software testing conference, International Software Quality test (ISQT) International testing conference etc. It is seen that the Quality professionals actively participate in these conferences. A professional’s morale will be elevated if he or she is selected to present a paper in these conferences. This is a situation where in the ego state of a professional is cajoled and is elevated to a higher level of motivation. To establish this as a system, organizations should seriously research on more platforms in the public domain to pave way for the brand ambassadorship for the Quality professionals. This system should involve activities like mentoring, guidance to participate in the ambassadorship program, review by a senior team etc.

6. Predicted outcome and benefits

On one side of the coin, for any organizational growth, the product or the services offered has to be developed as a good brand in the market place. On the other side of the coin, having motivated resources to work for the organization is an equally important need for the organization to sustain and deliver quality products and services. Quality brand ambassadorship initiatives, by making the employee himself as the brand ambassador is a constructive collaboration of the two concepts which ultimately results in employee motivation along with promoting the brand name of the company. The below Figure (Fig 3) shows Quality brand Ambassadorship’s impact on the Self esteem of Professionals and the elevation of motivational levels. A few more benefits include enhanced knowledge for the employee, improved performance of the employee as well as the organization, more business leads, external exposure for the employee and more recognition for employee as well as organization in the Industry. Finally it is a win-win situation for both the employee and the organization.
7. Outcome of the pilot study conducted

A survey was done on a small set of IT professionals in Software Quality at Trivandrum. The questions typically covered the following points

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<th>Areas focussed in the pilot study</th>
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<td>Participation in Conferences</td>
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<td>Paper Presentation in conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking External Trainings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking Internal Trainings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in various Organizational Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speech in Public forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard / Model review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in online Public Forums</td>
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These areas were assigned weightage based on popularity among respondents. The ambassadorship points for the respondents were derived based on the number of participation instances and the respective weightage. Motivational Index was also derived for the respondents based on a set of questions. It portrays that there is a relationship between the ambassadorship points and motivational Index in the scatter diagram shown in Fig 4

![Motivation Index](image)

**Fig 4 X - Ambassadorship Points**

The data point with motivational index are more than 0.9 has the maximum ambassadorship point. However, there were points where motivational index was high and ambassadorship points were almost Zero. On analysis, It is seen some assignable causes. However, in most of the respondents it is clear that there is a positive correlation between ambassadorship points and motivational index.

8. Recommendations

Organizations can work on such initiative and if this becomes a proven model for motivating the ego state of professionals, then it can be on the lookout for more brand ambassadorship platforms. If all goes well, it is only a matter of time when Quality brand ambassadorship will make a remarkable presence in the motivational domain. Working towards establishing a strong correlation between
motivation and ambassadorship would be a proof of validating the Quality Ambassadorship theory. Finally statistically validating by establishing a positive correlation between motivational index and ambassadorship Points as in figure Fig 5.

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<tr>
<th>Ambassadorship Points (AP)</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Motivational Index(MI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP 1</td>
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<td>MI 1</td>
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<td>AP 2</td>
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<td>AP 3</td>
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<td>AP 4</td>
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Fig 5. Correlation of Ambassadorship Points (AP) and Motivational Index (MI)

9. Conclusion
To conclude with, the study focuses on the quality among IT professionals happens when there is a high motivational index. The motivational indices may highly be influenced when there IT professionals are allowed to represent as the brand ambassadors of their companies.

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