

# Seifert: 'Put More Quality in White-Collar Processes'

*Cites customer communications and order intervals*

"The recent quality program at AT&T Bell Laboratories has been outstanding," says Larry Seifert, AT&T's vice president-engineering, manufacturing and production planning. "But we are just starting to focus on quality improvement in white-collar activities."

Seifert gave the keynote address at the Quality Day Symposium, sponsored by the AT&T research and development community, at Bell Laboratories, Holmdel, N.J. The symposium was held on the last working day in October, National Quality Month.

"The milestone we need to reach is applying those process techniques that work so well in manufacturing to white-collar operations," he said.

Seifert cited customer communications and order intervals as examples of white-collar processes where product realization work is needed. "Ten years ago we would blame the blue-collar worker on the factory floor for those problems," he said. "Now we know that it's a management problem.

"We're trying to build into the corporate culture the concept that each person must measure himself or herself against the customer's expectations," said Seifert. In white-collar situations, as in manufacturing, he said, the employee has a supplier who provides inputs, and a customer who needs the employee's output in order to do his

or her job. Thus the employee is responsible for managing the quality of a process that converts inputs to outputs.

As an example, Seifert cited Bill Weiss, a speechwriter at Network Systems. While working on executives' speeches about quality, Weiss began to wonder how the principles could affect his own operations. "His

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*—Larry Seifert*

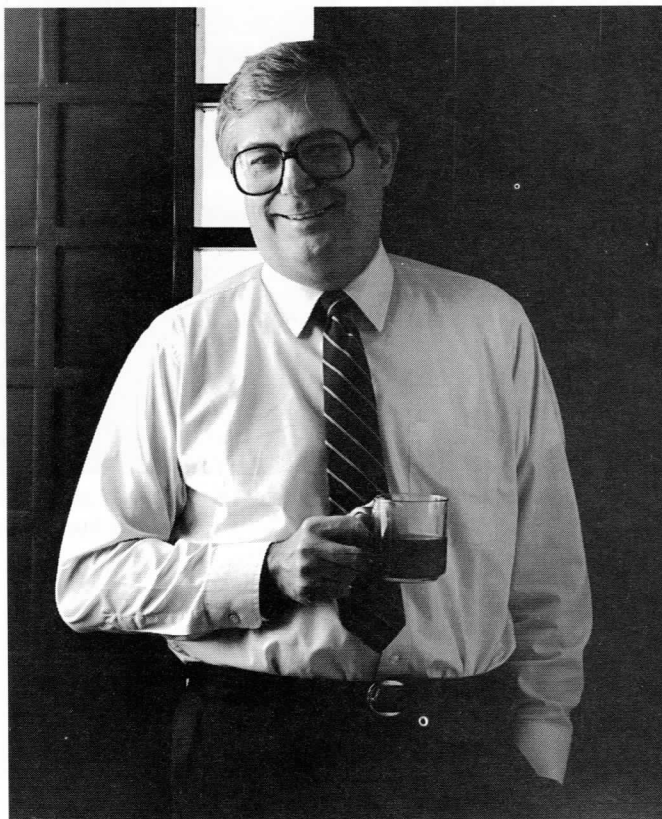
organization applied process technology to the way they generate viewgraphs for us," Seifert said. "Now the quality of the viewgraphs is up, and Weiss hopes to save \$100,000 next year on his budget."

Seifert believes that the momentum is building and "there is clearly a renaissance coming along" in white-collar quality. "The real issue is the people on line and their management measuring themselves against the customer's expectations," he said. "Management must be supportive of quality issues, taking an active role. It's got to be driven into the fabric of what we do."

Bonnie Small, (see *Focus* Oct. 20), retired AT&T employee who was head of the Allentown, Pa., team that produced the *Statistical Quality Control Handbook*, was on hand for the symposium. Published 31 years ago, the handbook has sold over a million copies and is considered the bible of quality control.

At a luncheon given in her honor, Mrs. Small was presented with a personal computer and a QC Toolkit. The software package incorporates Small's statistical tools so that they can be used with a personal computer to help manufacturing engineers and product designers solve problems at their desktops or on the factory floor.

Holly Bigelow



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