

# Walter Deming the Father of Quality Control....and what does he have to do with digital media?

BY DOUG WINTZ · JANUARY 23, 2013 ·



E. Walter Deming did not work for an ad serving company. He did not write code. He was not a social media guru. He did not Tweet. He was not an angel investor. He did not even live during the rise of internet media.

So why does he matter now?

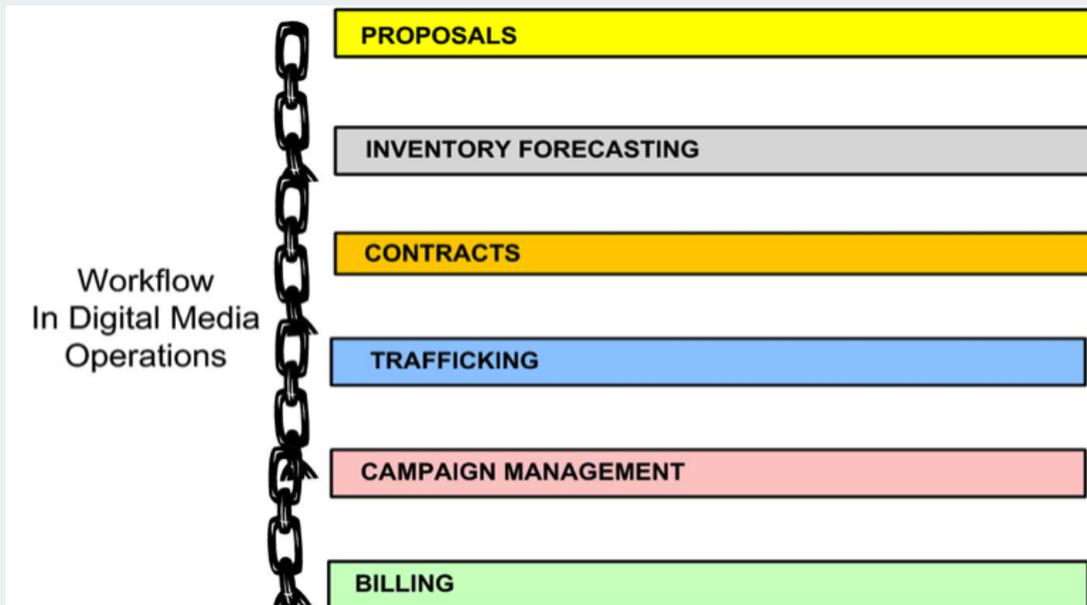
At the conclusion of World War II, Deming, an Iowa native and a statistician with a PHD from Yale, was doing work for the U.S. Census Bureau. Deming was asked to assist the Allied forces in post-war Japan with the development of a census in that country. But he also brought with him theories on the use of statistics in industry, specifically related to process, workflow and quality control. It was the right place and the right time for Deming. While in Japan he applied his theories on a more efficient way of creating products to then unknown start-ups like Toyota. And as a result, he had a direct impact on the rise of Japanese industry and products whose attention to quality changed how the world manufactured goods and service.

One of Deming's contributions was process related. His "PDCA" methodology encouraged business to PLAN by defining objectives and creating a workflow to achieve them, DO by actually implementing the process, CHECK the results of the plan and then ACT to take corrective action.

## Links in a Chain

Building a complicated product like an automobile and achieving perfection in manufacturing is difficult and requires discipline. **Scheduling and implementing a digital media campaign is complex too and requires discipline.** Proposals, Inventory Management, Contracts, Trafficking, Campaign Management and Billing are like links in a chain. If you don't PLAN by defining and documenting the roles, objectives and workflow for each one of these stages, how will you ever be able to conduct your business efficiently?

Here are the stages of digital media operations. Like links in a chain, they are interconnected. And behind each stage is a predefined PLAN or workflow for achieving specific objectives.



Does your digital ad operations department have a document that clearly defines what the process is for all the functions that handle media – one that defines how they interact with one another? Frequently, these functions operate in silos with no centralized documentation on how they all work together. If you a media executive, and can't explain the basic workflow that runs this critical area of your business, you are operating in the dark.

Not a pleasant place to be.

Of course, in order to make the plans work, you have to enact or “DO” them. Sounds simple, yet it also means you need to assign roles and responsibilities to the people that will actually do the work. Often, workflow breaks down because that assignment is not crystal clear. For instance, who is responsible for monitoring the pacing of digital campaigns? Is it the trafficker? Is it the sales assistant or planner? Often the assignment is unclear, and that creates an environment where each party assumes the other is performing the task. So at the end of the campaign, when it under-delivers, the point of responsibility is not clear. And therefore, the ability to improve the process is lost.

For any of these processes, you must CHECK the results to gauge how you are performing against your stated PLAN or workflow. You need to know how much Sales has sold, and how much was actually delivered. You need to measure the difference (the “delta”) between the two and on a regular basis and learn why there is a shortfall. Is it inaccurate inventory forecasting? Overbooking of campaigns? Mistakes in trafficking? Selling products that don't exist? Once you CHECK the results, you can pinpoint the gaps, and take corrective action.

Which brings us to ACT. You've defined the workflow and formalized the PLAN, you've enacted that plan (DO) and run a CHECK of results to see what worked and what did not. The completion of the cycle is to ACT on the analyzed results, and created a new PLAN to make things better. This strategy applies to any function in ad operations. Creating functional and scalable ad products. Creating accurate inventory forecasts. Reducing errors in campaign trafficking. All of which uses the process of quality control to improve workflow.

In the beginning, I found the details of E. Walter Deming interesting because he had a significant impact on a country and culture far from his own, during a time of great change. In the end, I found his ability to shape human interaction in a very technical industry compelling. I think we're doing the same thing in digital media – trying to make sense of very complicated processes, measure them and improve them.

Deming's 14 Points on Quality Management, a core concept on implementing total quality management, is a set of management practices to help companies increase their quality and productivity.

1. Create constancy of purpose for improving products and services.
2. Adopt the new philosophy.
3. Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality.
4. End the practice of awarding business on price alone; instead, minimize total cost by working with a single supplier.
5. Improve constantly and forever every process for planning, production and service.
6. Institute training on the job.
7. Adopt and institute leadership.
8. Drive out fear.
9. Break down barriers between staff areas.
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations and targets for the workforce.
11. Eliminate numerical quotas for the workforce and numerical goals for management.
12. Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship, and eliminate the annual rating or merit system.
13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.
14. Put everybody in the company to work accomplishing the transformation.



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