

Member Profile-Dr. T. N. Goh

Dr. T. N. Goh is our featured Fellow member in this issue. Dr. T. N. Goh became an ASQ member in 1986 and a Fellow in November 2001. Goh originally joined ASQ because he thought he would enjoy a sense of belonging to a profession that really matters when it comes to competitiveness in the quality profession. Goh feels that as a member, he contributes to the Society by providing in member feedback and offering volunteer services, creating a sense of ownership.

When Goh attends Annual Quality Congresses, he has the opportunity to network with other members by having conversations, interacting with fellow professionals from the United States and other parts of the world, as well as seeing his old friends and mentors. When he publishes research work in ASQ journals, he receives helpful comments and advice from his peers who are ASQ professionals. Once in a while, he is contacted via email by ASQ members he has never even met. Goh describes ASQ as a large family and that is part of what makes membership enjoyable and useful.

In 1973 Goh obtained his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which is also home to quality legends William G. Hunter, and George E. P. Box. According to Goh, statistical thinking, on top of the nitty-gritty of tools that he has acquired from these great quality statisticians personally has left an indelible mark on his academic and professional career. The way that "BH²" transferred their knowledge and insights – via parables, reminiscences, and anecdotes and beers and songs in the basement, has been unique and precious, something only a limited number of people were fortunate enough to have experienced. Furthermore, "When I learned RSM (response surface methodology) as a student, for example, I spent many summer evenings in a room plotting ellipses on graph papers," recalled Goh, "but now my own students generate page after page of colorful RSM contours in a variety of formats simply by clicking the mouse." This shows that techniques are transient, but thinking is what really matters – in this particular case, that means the need for a deep understanding of the strategic role and approach of RSM, rather than contour plotting procedures.

So, the emphasis on building a cathedral rather than laying bricks – to use a parable on how thinking and approach can be different for people doing apparently the same thing – is what permeates Goh's

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career in teaching, research, industrial training, and consulting. Even if one chooses to think about brick laying, it is useful to think of better or more logical ways to lay bricks than what "has always been the way": this for example is what years ago motivated Goh to work on alternative versions of SPC (statistical process control) charts. Put simply, a large majority of process control charts described in textbooks originated in an era when defective rates were at least of the order of single digit percentage. "But in industry, people are singing the virtues of Six Sigma, i.e., 3.4 defects per million – so you must reconcile this, or you're simply wasting both your time and your students' or industry people's time!" Subsequently, Goh's alternative charting approach was included in newer SPC manuals and texts (such as Grant and those by Leavenworth); many related papers have been published by other researchers as well in recent years.

Goh, a professor of industrial and systems engineering and a registered professional engineer, is currently Director of the Office of Quality Management, National University of Singapore. He has been active in the international professional scene for many years, for example serving on a variety of international academic advisory boards, promotion committees, grant agency review panels, and Ph.D. committees in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Asian countries. He is also an elected Academician of the International Academy for Quality, a body of influential professionals in business, government, and academia. Goh is a frequently invited speaker at international conferences and corporate meetings, and has conducted numerous human resource development programs ranging from top management briefings to full-fledged Black Belt training. He has published widely, and currently serves on the editorial boards of leading research and professional publications such as *Quality Engineering* (of the American Society for Quality), *Quality and Reliability Engineering International*, *International Journal of Reliability, Quality, and Safety Engineering*, *TQM*, *International Journal of Production Economics*, and others.

In all, Goh has had a satisfying career, and ASQ membership makes that career even more rewarding. With today's globalization of professions and businesses, ASQ has also increasingly taken on international flavor, and that's most gratifying to members who are not residing in the United States.

Other than academic and professional pursuits, Goh said that he also likes things that "a healthy person would enjoy." He is a marathon runner, enjoys interesting conversation, good music, thought-provoking movies, and sightseeing in foreign lands.

Dr. Goh may be reached at: isegohtn@nus.edu.sg.

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