Can you believe that *Introducing the Big Q: A Practical Quality Primer* came out in 2004? From all the great feedback received since that time, it became clear that your relationship with the big Q has deepened. Hence, it is time to move past simple introductions and take that relationship to the next level: romance! After all, you don’t seem like the type that’s afraid of commitment, and believe me, the big Q requires commitment! How then does one move beyond flowers and candy, all the way to the altar of excellence? By giving Q a ring, that’s how! And by “ring,” we mean circle, and by “circle,” we mean ongoing spiral of improvement. Think of *Introducing the Big Q* as having provided you the diamonds for a glorious promise. The only thing missing was the band. Think of *Romancing the Big Q* as offering the band on which the diamonds are supported, with no one diamond (or quality tool) more important than another. Each is dependent on the other, and with each turn and placement of the band, the diamonds become more brilliant (which doesn’t mean you should be taking an indiscriminate number of trips to the altar!). So, where *Introducing the Big Q* provided disaggregate tools for quality, *Romancing the Big Q* provides a framework for performance excellence that aggregates the disaggregate tools, while incorporating other tools and concepts.

*Romancing the Big Q* opens with a prologue introducing you to a fictitious blood center. Here, you’ll learn about the structure of the center and some of its history, as well as its “aha!” moment when it clearly recognized it needed more than disaggregate quality. Having ignited a romance with performance excellence, the center takes steps to develop it in Chapter 1 by first ensuring the right leadership is in place. The rest of the love story flows on from Chapter 2, where strategic plan development is presented, along with the blood center’s own strate-
gic challenges. In the chapters that follow, you’ll learn how information is gathered to learn about your constituencies in terms of the strategic challenges. Then you’ll find out how to deploy plans from that data and measure those plans for monitoring and organizational control and performance improvement. You’ll learn about risk management planning and how emergency preparedness flows from this planning, intersecting with typical process planning methods. And last, you’ll see how to gaze toward the future so that the romance never dies.

Written in alignment with the chatty nature of *Introducing the Big Q*, each chapter first gives you theory in terms of the quality tool or management concept presented in that respective chapter. Then the information is applied at our fictitious blood center in the second half of the chapter. The chapters flow from one to another in an attempt to be a seamless application of concepts, circling back always to the core planning processes. To that end, the book itself took myriad conference calls and electronic discussions to create, as the authors struggled, strained, stormed, fumed, and fussed in an attempt to give you a useful product, both theoretically and practically. We believe you will find our effort useful.

Good luck with your relationship with the big Q. Remember, dancing with and romancing the Q is like dancing with a gorilla. You don’t sit when you get tired. You sit when the gorilla gets tired. And the gorilla doesn’t get tired. Enjoy the dance!

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