



INTERNATIONAL  
QUALITY  
AWARDS  
2020

**Capella Associates Ltd**

**Winner** | Quality Organisation of the Year (SME)



CQI



IRCA

LEADING QUALITY FOR 100 YEARS

# Case Study

**How Capella drives  
stakeholder value  
and growth as a  
small organisation**

In partnership with



**UKAS**

Developing  
the **quality**  
**professionals**  
of the future.



## Capella Associates Ltd

### LOCATION OF ORGANISATION

United Kingdom

### AWARD CATEGORY

Quality Organisation of the Year (SME)

### NAME OF AUTHOR(S)

Paul Simpson

### PUBLISHED

April 2021



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The judges summarised Capella's award submission as follows:

Capella provides consultancy, training, coaching, technical support and assessment; and they are well known for their work in Lean Six Sigma and quality tools. For the second year running, Capella provided evidence that a very small organisation can still exhibit considerable rigour in designing, implementing and operating a management system that puts quality at its heart. In responding to the challenges of Covid-19, everyone at Capella has been driven by wanting to make the company stronger. The company values of pride, integrity and passion shone through the submission and there was a 'live demonstration' of them during the interview.



Pride



Passion



Integrity

3x

learner-numbers  
over 24 months

1%

of turnover donated

95%

Ofsted assessment score for  
'things you should be doing'



## CONTEXT

Capella is a private training provider specialising in Lean Six Sigma and quality tools. They are a small team of 14 people that works flexibly. Capella were involved in the development of improvement and quality apprenticeships and was the first to deliver the qualification. They tripled learner-numbers over 24 months, adding six new sectors to the scheme.

### Challenges and objectives

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, Capella's whole business model was threatened. The company could have stopped its work and furloughed all its employees but chose not to. This would have benefitted nobody. Instead, Capella tested its processes, built new ones and tested its new models against changed market requirements.

- The Skills Funding Agency demanded compliance with a new set of rules – Changing its system to meet the new requirements, Capella enabled 18 furloughed apprentices to remain on the programme, continuing to build highly valuable skills.

- Although the pandemic dramatically affected Capella's delivery model, Ofsted's safeguarding and quality requirements remained unchanged – Capella completed the Ofsted assessment, scoring 95% against the list of requirements for 'things you should be doing'.
- The pandemic affected other interested parties too. The Capella-nominated charities required increased support – the company donated 1% of its turnover through a Team Working project.

One of the company values is integrity – 'always doing the right thing'. This guided all the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, published guidance was slow and vague. Capella realised the importance of looking after the safety of the team, learners and employers. Remote delivery was identified as the only sensible route and the Operations team worked around-the-clock to:

- explore and trial options
- ensure compliance
- gain approval
- implement the revised processes.

Another Capella core value is passion – ‘doing our very best’. The company tapped into this through the period of the pandemic by constant questioning, benchmarking, and improvement.

For example, Capella launched three new training modules, and local risk assessments to enable course delivery to comply with the ‘prevent’ statutory responsibility for further education providers, underpinned by counter-terrorism policing data.



“It was encouraging to see a team with so much passion for their work, and how they had adapted in the light of Covid-19, while continuing to deliver their service.”

“Capella’s entry was a real team effort. I was left with the impression that everyone in the company gets involved.”

**JUDGES QUOTE**

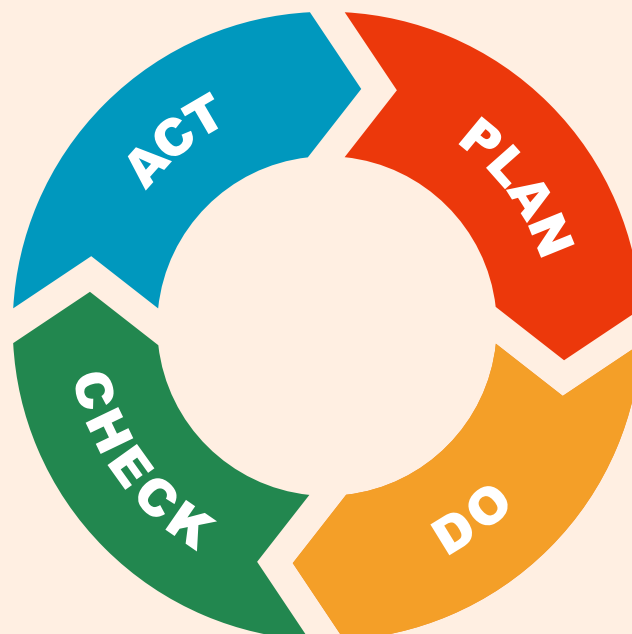
“This deep understanding of the current state meant that when the Coronavirus struck, Capella were able to calmly and systematically review all objectives, identify key priorities and remain focused.”



## HOW QUALITY MANAGEMENT HELPED

Capella trains and teaches Process Design and Improvement and uses this knowledge to manage its own processes. Key business processes are mapped using a SIPOC structure (suppliers, inputs, process, outputs, customers) and a modified FMEA (Failure Modes and Effects Analysis) template is used to analyse and minimise business risks.

Capella's documented Quality Management System covers the interaction of all processes and is structured to ensure all ISO9001 requirements are met. This deep understanding of the current state meant that when the Coronavirus struck, Capella were able to calmly and systematically review all objectives, identify key priorities and remain focused.





## GOVERNANCE

Capella's vision, mission and values reflect the needs of all interested parties. They're reviewed annually and adjusted as required. The key factor is that they are lived by the senior team and demonstrated by everyone.

Capella uses ongoing assessments/improvements to help build a robust and flexible infrastructure. This has helped the company in reacting successfully to Covid-19.



## ASSURANCE

Capella focuses on building robust systems and processes and applying continuous assessment tools to constantly reduce variation. The company tracks performance and revises actions in the light of market changes.

- Six-monthly – Capella reviews its performance against objectives, a SWOT analysis and the Business FMEA process.
- Quarterly – it reviews performance and shares the results with associates; customers; sub-contractors and the company's advisory board, which includes third parties for robust governance.

Capella drives rigour and standardises best practice through its ISO9001 compliant management system.



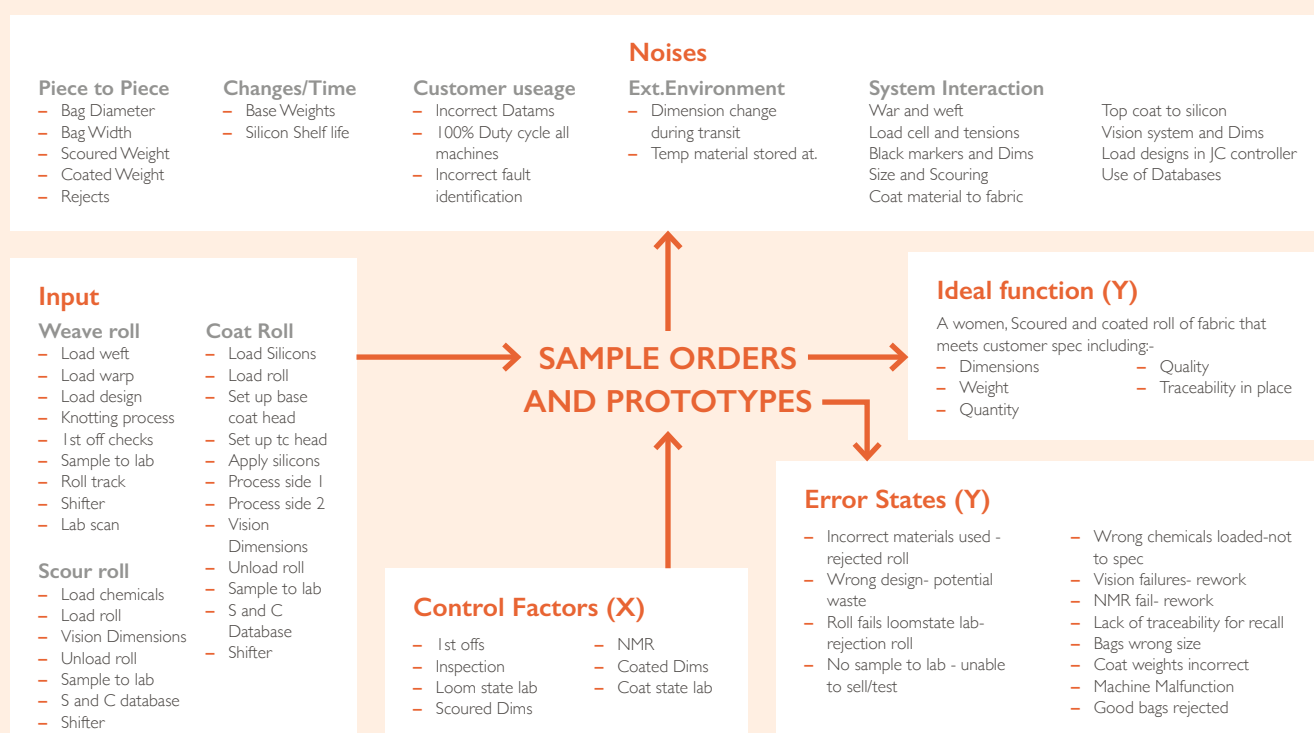
“Capella uses ongoing assessments/improvements to help build a robust and flexible infrastructure.”



## IMPROVEMENT

By challenging thinking and agreeing to a range of robust, rapid improvements, Capella:

- has continued to provide quality training for 236 apprentices and 31 employers. Learners have completed improvement projects that yield, on average, a reduction of 45% in the cost of poor quality.
- improved management data (highlighted by the Business FMEA as a potential risk), by creating a dashboard and recruiting a programme manager, which helped identify gaps and resulted in a reduction of four days per month in the Leadership team's time
- understood the importance of continuing to minimise enrolment-processing-time, and implemented further improvements (reducing from 4 to 0.5 weeks).





## LEADERSHIP

Capella believes that strong leadership, combined with a determination to succeed, and openness to feedback/change, has underpinned its response to the pandemic. This has resulted in delivering great outcomes for all.

The move to remote working led to a dramatic change for the team. Capella introduced team-building events to spend time together.



## RESULTS

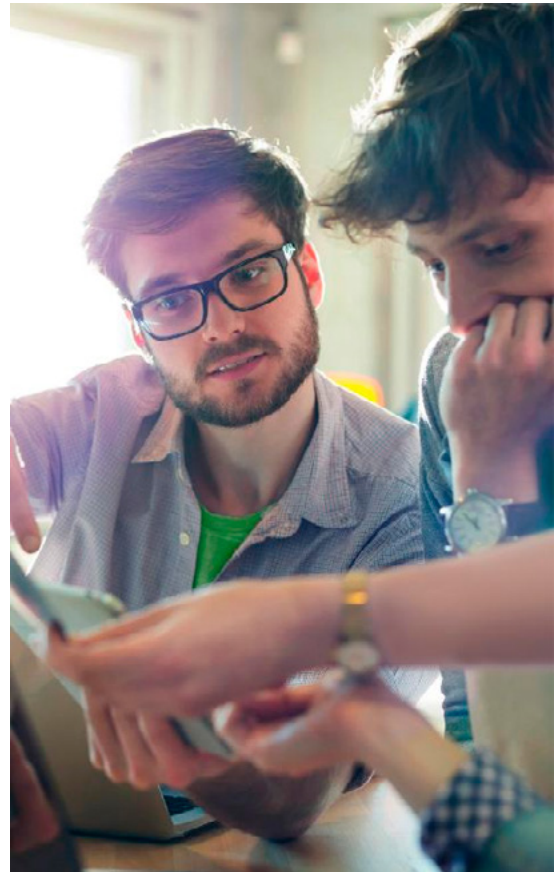
- Capella converted 16 in-flight programmes from face-to-face to online delivery. Throughout, effective learning was maintained, as validated by learners/employers.
- In the Associate Survey, Capella scored an average 8.9/10 against performance statements.
- Customer feedback survey responses increased from 23% to 62%.
- Some of the projects delivered by learners, through their courses, have produced stunning results:
  - Reducing product damage currently costing £25,000 a year in scrap costs
  - Reducing the estimated cost of poor quality of 190 hours per month, through improved process efficiency.

**8.9/10**

score against  
performance statements

**£25k**

a year saved due to  
reduced product damage







## FUTURE PLANS

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Following a very challenging 2020, the main objectives for 2021 focus on consolidation, but a few key improvement projects have been agreed. The main areas being explored are related to technology and making sure there's an understanding of 'what else is in the sweet shop?' to support excellent remote teaching and learning.



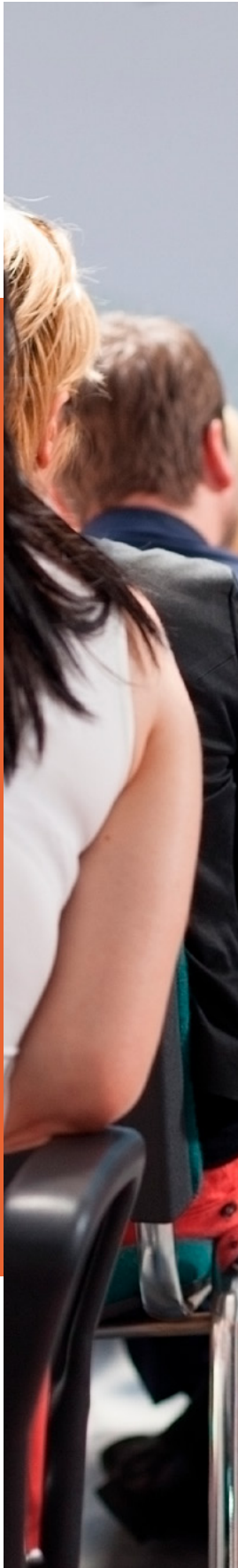
## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- **Teamworking** – Improvement relies on true team effort, energy and enthusiasm.
- **Employee care** – Quality and improvement are driven by people. Care for them and they will care for your customer.
- **Managing disruption** – Change brings opportunity, providing that it's approached with the right mindset, method and tools.
- **Interested parties** – The Management System must clearly set out and always meet company, customer, colleagues, and community requirements.
- **Stakeholder voice** – Regularly assessing the impact of actions is the only way to understand the current state and whether further improvements need to be prioritised.

“Capella’s focus on developing long-term relationships, and their continual search for innovative approaches to upskilling, have enabled Toyota and many other employers to learn and apply best practice problem-solving tools that deliver great outcomes for all.”

**PAUL FITZPATRICK – SENIOR MANAGER, TOYOTA UK**



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