

2003 Arizona Pioneer Award for Quality

Sonora Quest Laboratories



Company Information:

Highest Ranking Official:

David A. Dexter
President & Chief Executive
Officer

Contact Person:

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Type of work:

Sonora Quest Laboratories is a joint venture clinical laboratory between Banner Health, the largest health care system in the state of Arizona, and Quest Diagnostics Incorporated, the largest clinical laboratory provider in the United States. SQL provides a broad range of laboratory testing services to physicians, hospitals, and other healthcare providers throughout the state of Arizona.

Workforce: 1,200 employees

Testimonial of Value of Arizona State Quality Awards Program

“Sonora Quest Laboratories (SQL) is pleased to participate in the Arizona State Quality Awards Program. As a key healthcare provider in Arizona, SQL is committed to the pursuit of accurate testing results, on time, every time. The Quality Awards application process enabled SQL to obtain a unique perspective on our company’s overall performance by specifically focusing on organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement through the internal and external assessment process. The results qualified SQL for recognition as a Pioneer Award recipient, but the process also helped us to identify additional opportunities to improve employee and customer satisfaction, which will help us continue to drive profitable growth. We intend to systematically address the gaps and apply for the Governor’s Award in 2005.

Based on our experience, I would highly encourage other organizations to participate in the awards program and take advantage of the program’s processes to improve quality and recognize Arizona companies for performance excellence.”

-David A. Dexter, CEO, Sonora Quest Laboratories

Highlights of Organizational Process:

Quality and Performance Results

- Sonora Quest Laboratories’ performance outcomes have resulted in four consecutive years of strong operating margin improvement.
- Four years of strong revenue growth in the Arizona market place
- Market share leader in clinical laboratory testing in the state of Arizona
- Strong relationships built with key customers and payors
- Four years of continuous reduction in bad debt
- SQL has achieved four consecutive years of improvement in Customer Satisfaction Index Scores and is approaching World Class performance for this metric.
- SQL has achieved improvement for four consecutive years on Employee Satisfaction Index Scores and has attained industry defined World Class status for the past two years.

- Sonora Quest Laboratories has achieved four consecutive years of improvement in reducing employee attrition levels. The organization is approaching the World Class threshold for this metric.
- Customer Service Call Center Statistics perform at best-in class levels. The department has achieved this status for 49 consecutive months. The Average Speed of Answer is less than 20 seconds, the Abandonment rate is less than 1%, and the Service Factor is greater than 80%. Service Factor is defined as percent of calls answered in 20 seconds or less.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories participates in internal and external quality, compliance, and financial audits. The organization has maintained a green status on all audits conducted.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories has achieved Accreditation with Distinction from the College of American Pathologists.
- SQL has been recognized as a successful and improvement oriented organization in a complex, highly regulated, and competitive environment. The organization has demonstrated an effective and systematic approach using fact-based data analysis and decision-making.

Processes

- Sonora Quest Laboratories' Mission, Vision, Values, and Critical Success Factors define the organizations overall strategic intent. The Mission defines "what we do", the vision defines "who we are", and the values "guide our behaviors and decisions in the work place".
- Sonora Quest Laboratories is a Customer Driven organization that strives to meet customer requirements error free, on time, every time. The organization prepares a comprehensive regional market strategy to support customer's requirements and meet customer's needs.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories identifies core processes and support processes that are tightly linked and must be delivered flawlessly to meet customer requirements. The organization supports continuous improvement throughout all processes.
- Key measures or metrics are established for all key requirements of the organization's core and support processes.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories utilizes the Six Sigma Methodology to systematically improve processes throughout the organization. The organization employs full time process improvement leaders called Black Belts. In addition, the organization has trained a number of employees as Six Sigma Green Belts. Green Belts lead process improvement projects in their respective areas of operations. A Senior Leadership Team member is the project Champion for each project initiated. Projects are aligned with the organizations business objectives.
- A well-integrated approach exists to manage and provide analysis of organizational performance. Data is aligned with strategic objectives, processes, and results measurements.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories shares its business plan with all employees to create alignment and engagement of employees and support specific business objectives. The CEO and Senior Leadership Team members routinely present information at Town meetings, which are held on all shifts. This format has been devised to enable employees to review the business plan, receive performance updates, and ask any questions of clarification.
- SQL's business plan is supported by action plans, organizational objectives, specific goals required to reach the defined objectives, metrics associated with respective goals, measurements of current performance against plan, and comparative performance measurements against industry standards when available.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories is committed to providing learning and development opportunities to employees. Each year, employees are required to complete at least four mandatory trainings. Training sessions address Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Safety, and Compliance.
- Sonora Quest Laboratories utilizes a problem resolution management system to address internal and external problems and complaints. Metrics are tied to important aspects of the process and include resolution turn-around-time, percent of problems resolved in the established time frame, and the customer's satisfaction level with the resolution.