Each spring, ASQ convenes its flagship conference, the World Conference on Quality and Improvement (WCQI). A broad attendee base including ASQ members, customers, and those interested in quality, gathered in one location to learn, engage, and network. Attendees represented a wide array of industries and they enjoyed meeting quality professionals with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. The 2018 theme was The Innovation of You and included more than 100 sessions ranging from basic, intermediate, and advanced.

This year, WCQI was held in Seattle, WA, April 30 – May 2, 2018. Over 2,500 attendees from 45 different countries, heard internationally acclaimed keynote speakers, attended hands-on workshops, and participated in concurrent sessions featuring quality’s hottest topics. Each session presented real-life applications, solutions, and results based on quality principles, while the workshops allowed individuals to dive deeper into quality theories with hands-on learning activities.

The “After 5” sessions demonstrated how quality can be translated into social activities.

At the World Conference, attendees had opportunities to attend courses, sit in on sessions, become certified, network with leaders in quality, and learn about the newest products and services in quality from suppliers who were all available in one location. Only the World Conference can provide this opportunity.
There were five focus areas this year. Quality 4.0: The Future of Quality Starts Here, Risk and Change, Building and Sustaining a Culture of Quality, Quality Fundamentals in the Digital Age, and a Master’s Series. With such a variety of topics to select from, attendees often found it difficult to squeeze in everything they wanted to learn about and still network and meet new quality professionals.

At the World Conference, there was pageantry, as flags from around the world were paraded through the large keynote hall. There was drama, as 23 teams from eight countries competed for honors in the International Team Excellence Awards (ITEA) program. And there was levity, as the After 5 sessions covered the “lighter” side of quality. Topics included One Minute Problem-Solving Links Quality and Poker and Game-based Quality Culture: Let’s Play Family Feud.

The World Conference is a premier international event. Attendees had the chance to share ideas with both domestic and global colleagues, connecting and making business relationships that will foster success for years to come. Those who came to this year’s conference had the opportunity to see how other companies from all over the world have used quality tools to positively impact their bottom line.

*Donald Chimanda posted on myASQ about his conference experience, saying “Enjoying the World Conference in Seattle. Great conversations, networking and learning a lot.”*
The live case studies from the 2017 ITEA process took attendees through some of the most successful quality implementations from a wide variety of industries. Max India Life Insurance and Max India Health were awarded a bronze and gold level award. This is the first time that two teams from the same firm were both judged to be the best among the competition. A silver award was given to the Pan Asia Technical Automotive Center.

As soon as this year’s attendees were back at work, they could start implementing some of the tips, tricks, and ideas they took away from the conference. They heard many success stories on continuous improvement initiatives, ways to decrease waste and improve productivity, and how to increase operational efficiency. Attendees gave this conference a definite “thumbs up.”

**ASQ Center and Exhibit Hall**

The ASQ Center was in the middle of the exhibit hall and, as it is every year, a hub of activity! This year, the ASQ Center’s theme was the Innovation of YOU—taking your career to the next level. Reflecting that theme, the center featured an area to learn more about ASQ certifications and the computer-based testing process, a myASQ kiosk where guests could explore the new platform and complete their profiles, a knowledge bar with daily presentations on topics such as how to become an ASQ author, which certification is right for you, myASQ, and more.
There was a wall where attendees could chart their certification path, and life-size quality “guru” cutouts. Quite a few photos were taken next to this likeness of Philip Crosby (photo, far left). As always, the center included the ASQ bookstore, International Team Excellence Program finalist posters, and fun networking activities such as a photo booth, and a giant Jenga game.

**Monday, April 30, 2018**

On day one of WCQI, a packed crowd of almost 3,000 heard keynote speaker, Mel Robbins. Robbins is a CNN commentator, author, and motivational speaker, known for her book, *The 5 Second Rule*. Robbins discussed how we often overthink good ideas and decisions. She encouraged the audience to act on initial instincts within five seconds to avoid talking themselves out of action. Robbins is one of the most sought-after motivational speakers in the world, and after her keynote, the audience knew why.
The afternoon keynote speaker was Luke Williams, a marketing professor and innovation strategist. He told the audience that disruptive thinking isn’t about destroying things and starting over—it’s about thinking differently and letting go of preconceptions.

He asked the audience if someone, somewhere was going to disrupt their industry, shouldn’t it be them? He revealed ways they could rethink the power to transform their business and stay ahead of the game.

Right after the keynote, attendees were invited to participate in the Attendee Orientation session to mingle with other guests and learn how to get the most out of their WCQI experience.

Kelly Beasley, of the Denver Section and Audit Division, won the contest and will be awarded new cowboy boots from Fort Worth, TX, which is our 2019 WCQI host city.

Another popular game this year was the “guru button game,” in which people received a quality guru button during the orientation session and were asked to recruit additional members to their guru team throughout the week. From the winning team, five members were selected to win an Echo Dot.
Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Tuesday at the World Conference kicked off with keynote speaker John McElligott. His presentation covered the impact of coming technology and artificial intelligence on all aspects of our lives. Disruption will happen, he said, and you can prepare if you pay attention to market predictions. An expert on exponential technology, he programmed a robot in real time, and spoke extensively about how everyone needs to know more about artificial intelligence and machine learning.

The afternoon keynote by Adam Steltzner focused on the power of human curiosity, innovation, and a bit of the “right kind of crazy.” Adam was once an aspiring rock star, who eventually became a NASA engineer. For 10 years, he led a team of engineers which developed the “sky crane” landing system that successfully placed the Mars rover on the Martian surface in 2012. With a unique, exciting, and inspiring narrative, Steltzner spoke about the importance of fostering a culture of collaborative innovation and told the audience that with the “right kind of crazy,” which is also the title of his book released in 2016, everyone can significantly expand boundaries and achieve the impossible.
On Tuesday, the afternoon capped off with the exhibit hall extravaganza, which featured entertainment, prizes, and games, and even a money tree. Attendees had the opportunity to view product demos from ETQ, Minitab, BSI, and more. If they stopped by the Automotive Division booth, they also had the option to sit in the driver’s seat of two different vehicles. Attendees were also invited to visit the Quality 4.0 Theater where presentations on cryptocurrency and disruptive technologies took place.

The day concluded with the chair’s reception, where two new honorary members and two distinguished service medalists were announced. Then, a networking reception was held, where ASQ’s past chairs were recognized. Both events were held at the very impressive Museum of Flight.

*Paul Tanner said he found inspiration at the 2018 WCQI and posted on myASQ about one keynote speaker in particular. “Adam Steltzner sparked joy and hope in me.” And he also found good luck. “Last night, I won three books, Strategic Connections from Quality Management Division, Six Sigma Green Belt from the Six Sigma Forum, and The Certified Supplier Quality Professional Handbook from the Customer Supplier Division.”*
Wednesday, May 2, 2018

Day three meant it was nearing the conclusion of WCQI. But first, there was the final keynote by Peter Sheahan, a CEO known for his innovative business thinking and thought leadership. He gave the audience advice about facing the challenges of growing a business in this rapidly changing marketplace.

Innovation of YOU!

Because of this year’s theme, there were many discussions about what innovation meant to different individuals. Innovation itself is neither a new concept nor a new practice, but attendees heard the demand for innovation in the workplace has shifted dramatically. Out-of-the-box thinking, paradigm shifts, and challenging the status quo, are all efforts that organizations have embraced for decades to gain advantage. However, today’s exponential pace of change has shifted innovation from a practice that brings advantage to a practice that is required just to keep up. Throughout World Conference, quality professionals came to realize that innovation of one’s self can only be fully realized through embracing change, the acceptance of its inevitability, and the acknowledgement that a faster future is already here. The future IS now, and both organizations and individuals have a choice to either lead the change it is bringing or be led by the change that occurs. It is within these disruptive conditions that ASQ held its 72nd World Conference. Each conference goer was encouraged to take the next steps in becoming a more innovative YOU!

New ASQ member John Coupe posted on myASQ, “Hello everybody! Just joined at WCQI 2018.”

Welcome to all new members of ASQ, existing members and customers, and thank you to all who attended the 2018 WCQI. Join us May 20 – 22, 2019, in Fort Worth, TX, for the next World Conference.

The 2018 conference recordings will soon be available. Click here for more information.