An Introduction to ISO 9000 Quality Management Standards

Business Information Factsheet

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Introduction

ISO 9000 is the name given to a group of standards that provide a widely accepted framework for establishing an effective and certified quality management system (QMS). The standards are designed to be used by any organisation, regardless of its size or the products and services it provides.

The standards were developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO, www.iso.org), which reviews them every five years. The ISO, based in Switzerland, is the world's largest developer of international standards and is a network of the national standards institutes of 162 member countries worldwide.

For any business, introducing the ISO 9000 group of quality management standards requires considerable commitment of both personnel and capital resources. However, it can bring marketing, operational and financial benefits. It demonstrates to customers and suppliers that a business follows recognised procedures for quality management and control. It can also reduce costs by ensuring that customer requirements and feedback are recorded accurately, production processes are controlled effectively and the business continually seeks to improve performance.

This factsheet explains what the ISO 9000 standards cover, the advantages of implementation, and how the certification process works.

What standards are in the ISO 9000 group?

ISO 9000 consists of three core standards:

1) ISO 9000:2015 Quality Management Systems - Fundamentals and Vocabulary

This standard defines the terminology used and describes seven basic quality management principles that can lead an organisation towards improved performance and the introduction of a QMS:

- Customer focus.

- Leadership.

- Engagement of people.

- Process approach (ie understanding activities within the organisation as processes that link together and function as a system).

- Improvement.

- Evidence-based decision making.

- Relationship management.

2) ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems - Requirements

This is the second standard in the group, and the only part of ISO 9000 under which organisations can become certified. It describes seven different aspects of a QMS. To be certified, organisations must demonstrate that they have addressed all seven aspects.

- Context of the organisation.

- Leadership.

- Planning.

- Support.

- Operation.

- Performance evaluation.

- Improvement.

ISO 9001:2015 was introduced in September 2015, when it replaced ISO 9001:2008. Organisations that have already been certified under ISO 9001:2008 have until 2018 to transition to the 2015 standard. For guidance about transitioning from ISO 9001:2008 to ISO 9001:2015, go to www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/en-IN/Resources/ISO%209001/9001_transition_guide%20web.pdf.

3) ISO 9004:2009 Managing for the Sustained Success of an Organisation - A Quality Management Approach

The third standard in the group consists of guidelines rather than requirements and is not part of the certification process. It provides recommendations for sustaining success and achieving continual improvements in overall performance and efficiency. The objectives of customer satisfaction and product quality are extended to include the satisfaction of employees, owners, suppliers and society in general.

What are the advantages of ISO 9001 certification?

ISO 9001:2015 is based on the accepted minimum standards for a well-managed organisation - standards that any business should, in any case, be aiming to meet.

- ISO 9001 certification helps a business demonstrate to customers and suppliers that it has a commitment to quality. Because the standard is recognised in over 170 countries, it can help the business market its products internationally.

- The process of implementing the requirements of ISO 9001 can help a business raise its overall performance.

- ISO 9001 certification is often a condition when tendering for major contracts or attempting to become a supplier to a large international organisation.

How to achieve ISO 9001 certification

To achieve ISO 9001 certification, a business must be audited by an independent certification body. ISO recommends choosing a certification body that has been accredited by an ISO-approved accreditation service, because accreditation provides independent confirmation that the certification body is competent. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), which is the government-appointed national accreditation body for the UK, provides a directory of accredited certification bodies at www.ukas.com/search-accredited-organisations.

When a business hires a certification body, it begins by carrying out a 'stage 1 audit'. Following this audit, it will inform the business about any aspects of its QMS that require improvement before the full certification audit (known as the 'stage 2 audit') can be carried out.

When the business has made any necessary improvements and finalised its QMS, the certification body will carry out the stage 2 certification audit to confirm that the system is fully aligned with ISO 9001.

In additional to providing formal audits, many certification bodies provide optional preliminary assessments designed to help a business begin the process of establishing a QMS that complies with ISO 9001. On the basis of these preliminary assessments, certification bodies will offer a package of consultancy services, training and software to enable the business to become ready to apply for certification.

It is not compulsory for a business to make use of any consultancy or training services before applying for certification. However, it may be advisable if the business lacks the management skills and other internal resources needed to implement an effective QMS.

How long does ISO 9001 certification remain valid?

ISO 9001 certification is valid for three years, but only if the business receives a regular 'surveillance audit', carried out by a certification body, to check that compliance with ISO 9001 is being maintained. The frequency of these surveillance audits depends on the size and structure of the business and the complexity and risk of its activities, but they usually take place once a year.

At the end of the three-year period, the business must undergo a recertification audit. If it does not, its ISO 9001 certification will expire.

Calculating the costs of ISO 9001 certification

The auditing fees charged by certification bodies vary widely according to the annual turnover of the business that is being audited and factors that affect the amount of auditing time that will be required, such as:

- The complexity and risk levels of the business activities.

- The number of sites that the business operates from.

- The number of employees.

Typically, certification bodies provide quotations on request, rather than advertising fixed fees.

Further information

BIF144 An Introduction to British, European and International Standards

Useful publications

'Selection and Use of the ISO 9000 Family of Standards'
The International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
Website: www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/archive/pdf/en/
selection_and_use_of_iso_9000_family_of_standards_2016_en.pdf

'ISO 9001:2015: Your Implementation Guide'
BSI (the British Standards Institution)
Website: www.bsigroup.com/Documents/iso-9001/resources/ISO9001-IMPLEMENTATION-
GUIDE-FINAL-APRIL2016.pdf

'The Small Business Owner's Simplified Guide to ISO 9001 and Business Improvement'
BSI (the British Standards Institution)
Website: www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/en-GB/small-business/UK-SB-BSI-ISO-9001-Whitepaper-
UK-EN.pdf

'ISO 9001:2015 Self-assessment Questionnaire'
BSI (the British Standards Institution)
Website: www.bsigroup.com/Documents/iso-9001/resources/ISO9001-Self-Assessment-
checklist-FINAL-APR2016.pdf

Useful contacts

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is a national accreditation body that assesses
organisations providing certification and inspection services.
Tel: (01784) 429000
Website: www.ukas.com

BSI (the British Standards Institution) is the UK national standards body responsible for
developing British, European and international standards. It publishes standards and provides
certification services for management systems and products.
Tel: 0345 080 9000
Website: www.bsigroup.com