A Guide to ISO 9000 Quality Standards

Business Information Factsheet
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Introduction

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

This factsheet explains what the ISO 9000 standards cover, the advantages of implementation, and what a business has to do to achieve them.

What is ISO 9000?

ISO 9000 is the name given to the complete group of standards that provide a universally accepted framework around which an effective Quality Management System (QMS) may be implemented.

These standards have been developed over time by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO, www.iso.org), which first created the ISO 9000 structure in 1987. The ISO, based in Switzerland, is the world’s largest developer of international standards and is a network of the national standards institutes of 163 member countries worldwide. It is an independent, not-for-profit, non-Governmental organisation.

ISO standards have to be reviewed every five years and, since the introduction of a restructured ISO 9000:2000 in December 2000, increased emphasis on improving both processes and products has become an ongoing process.

What standards are in the ISO 9000 group?

ISO 9000 consists of three core standards:

1) ISO 9000:2005 Quality Management Systems - Fundamentals and Vocabulary

This standard defines the terminology to be used and describes the basic principles behind the introduction and servicing of a QMS. There are eight basic quality management principles that can be used to lead a business towards improved performance:

- Customer focus.
- Leadership.
• Involvement of people.
• Process approach.
• Systems approach to management.
• Continual improvement.
• Factual approach to decision making.
• Mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

2) ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management Systems - Requirements

This is the second standard in the group, and the only part of ISO 9000 against which an organisation can become certified. It has eight sections (the last four contain the requirements themselves) and a business will have to demonstrate that it has addressed all of them fully to be certificated against this standard.

• Scope.
• Normative references.
• Terms and definitions.
• QMS.
• Management responsibility.
• Resource management.
• Product realisation.
• Measurement, analysis and improvement.

ISO 9001:2008 replaced ISO 9001:2000 and all organisations certified since 14 November 2009 will be to the 2008 standard. This standard will be replaced in 2015 and further information about ISO 9001:2015 is available at www.iso.org/iso/iso9001_revision.

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. These are not intended to be seen as a route to the implementation of the other two standards, and cover a wider range of objectives for an effective QMS than ISO 9001:2008, with particular emphasis on achieving continual improvements in overall performance and efficiency. The twin objectives of customer satisfaction and product quality are extended to include the satisfaction of all interested parties and improving the overall performance of the business.

What are the advantages of ISO 9001 certification?

ISO 9001:2008 is based on the accepted minimum standards for a well managed organisation - standards that any business should, in any case, be aiming to meet.

• Should a business intend to market its products internationally, ISO 9001 certification will help it to demonstrate to prospective customers that it has a commitment to quality.
• The process of implementing the requirements for ISO 9001:2008 should 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.

What do you have to do to achieve ISO 9001 certification?

Steps you should take to achieve ISO 9001 certification include:

• Gaining a full understanding of the ISO 9001:2008 standard and what it will mean in your business. Decide whether you will engage a consultant or introduce a quality system using your own staff and resources. Either way, once you have gathered enough evidence to show that the QMS meets the ISO standard, you will need to appoint an approved external certification body to have your QMS certified. Further information about registration and a list of accredited certification bodies may be obtained from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS, www.ukas.com/about-accreditation/accredited-bodies/certification-body-schedules-QMS.asp).

• Presenting the concept positively to motivate and involve staff and setting up teams to design the QMS and to document the necessary procedures.

• Preparing a project plan. This will start off with a gap analysis: look in detail at where your business’ processes are now compared with where they need to be and then decide and document the interim steps and sub-processes that you must take to get there. You can purchase a standard checklist to help do this, for example from ISO 9001 Checklist (www.iso-9001-checklist.co.uk/products.htm). You then need to look at the whole plan to determine the project goals, identify all the various responsibilities, include the necessary staff training and agree the project timeline.

• Setting up an ISO steering team. This team must represent all the main process areas of your business, such as production, quality, administration, sales and marketing. You need to appoint people with the experience and authority to make decisions and allocate the necessary resources. With regular meetings throughout the project, this team will monitor progress, resolve problems and co-ordinate the design of the QMS.

• Setting up task teams. Each process will have its own task team to redesign procedures if necessary and document them once they meet ISO 9001:2008 requirements. Documentation does not have to consist of a printed manual for each process; it could be in the form of flowcharts, electronic texts, an online help facility, or even models or sample products.

• Training staff on implementing ISO 9001:2008. Your employees need to understand both the requirements of their job function and the importance of meeting customer requirements (remind employees that customers may be either external or internal to your organisation). They also need to appreciate the way in which their job contributes to meeting quality standards and improving business performance.

• Training your internal quality auditors. Internal auditors need the skills to prepare an audit plan, audit documents and records, record findings and write the audit report. Use the system for a few months while fine-tuning it and collecting records. During this period, you must follow all documented procedures and work instructions and make ongoing improvements to the processes. Conduct internal audits and hold frequent management meetings.
review meetings. Ensure that your records are of a high standard - this is a very important part, as explained in the next step.

- Undergoing the certification audit. The certification body’s auditor will be looking for evidence that you are complying fully with the requirements of ISO 9001:2008. This will be found in the records that your QMS generates, so ensure that you are following all the recording requirements strictly. Run your system for sufficient time before your certification audit so that there are enough records for the auditor to evaluate. Bear in mind that many auditors will not formally assess a system until it has been operating for a minimum of three months.

**What will the costs of ISO 9001 implementation be?**

The total cost will vary according to the size and complexity of your business, whether you have a QMS in place already, and whether external consultants are involved.

Make sure both consultant and certification body charges are clearly specified in advance; typically they will depend on the number of audit or consultant days required, travel costs and administration fees plus the actual certification fee. Sometimes charges depend on your turnover and there may also be ongoing costs for further advice and review assessments by consultants.

**What are the disadvantages of obtaining ISO 9001 certification?**

- The process of certification can be costly for a small business to obtain and maintain.
- It can take several months to obtain certification and there are no fast tracks.
- Keeping staff enthusiastic about the system is a continual task for management/business owners.
- All aspects of the system, not just the documentation involved, must be kept continually up to date.

**Hints and tips**

- Take care to present the planned implementation of ISO 9000 in the most positive way to your staff. If they are not fully committed to the objectives of the standard and enthusiastic about the benefits, successful implementation will become a burden to them.
- A specified competency or job-specific training can replace documented procedures, but there must be evidence of the assessment of staff against these specified competencies or evidence that the training has been undertaken.
- Some very small businesses may feel that ISO 9001 certification is a step too far. For those smaller firms the Chartered Quality Institute (CQI) has developed a Small Business Standard, which may be an appropriate first step to introducing a QMS (go to [www.thecqi.org/Knowledge-Hub/Resources/small-business-standard](http://www.thecqi.org/Knowledge-Hub/Resources/small-business-standard) for details).

**Further information**

For practical start up and small business tips, ideas and news, go to:
Website: www.enterprisequest.com

To access hundreds of practical factsheets, market reports and small business guides, go to:
Website: www.scavenger.net

BIF 144 An Introduction to British, European and International Standards

Books

David Hoyle
2009
Routledge

'ISO 9001:2008 for Small Businesses'
Ray Tricker
2009
Routledge

Useful contacts

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is a national accreditation body that assesses organisations that provide certification and inspection services. It publishes a list of accredited certification bodies.
Tel: (020) 8917 8400
Website: www.ukas.com

The BSI Group develops standards and provides testing services, training and information.
Tel: (020) 8996 9000
Website: www.bsigroup.co.uk

The Chartered Quality Institute (CQI) is a professional body for quality management that offers training and qualifications. It provides online directories of consultants and auditors.
Tel: (020) 7245 6722
Website: www.thecqi.org

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