ISO 9000 registered; Now what?

KENNETH J. ROSE

The Johnson Corp., manufacturer of rotary pressure joints and syphoning equipment, has achieved ISO 9000 registration in all three of its worldwide, wholly owned manufacturing facilities. Specialty Castings, a subsidiary, is currently pursuing registration. After several years of developing and implementing quality management systems in each of these facilities, it is time to kick back, relax, and celebrate, right? Wrong! Actually, the real work has just begun. This continuing process and its meaning to the Johnson Corp. are the focus of this article.

Project history

The Johnson Corp. initiated a corporate project in October 1989 to implement the ISO 9000 quality management system in each of its manufacturing facilities: The Johnson Corp., Three Rivers, MI; Johnson-Holland, Weesp, Holland; and Johnson Corp. (JOCO) Ltd., Ilkley, Yorkshire, U.K. This global project, coordinated from the corporate level, required each facility to develop and implement a quality management system in compliance with the appropriate ISO 9000 standard. The project developed and proceeded at varying paces within the three manufacturing facilities based on facility size and resources available. After several years of developing and implementing procedures, internal auditing, corrections to the system, pre-assessment audits, and registration audits, the project was successful.

JOCO Ltd. achieved ISO 9000 registration in March 1993, and Johnson-Holland followed with certification in April 1993. Johnson's Three Rivers, MI, facility completed the corporate goal by achieving registration in February 1994. Each of the facilities is formally registered to the ISO 9001 Quality Management System standard, the most stringent standard due to the product design and development portions. The remainder of this article focuses on the quality management system at the Johnson Corp. in Three Rivers, MI.

Now what?

The ISO 9001 quality management system is a process of continuous system maintenance and improvement. Having quality systems in place and documented procedures on hand paves the way for a company's registration. However, to maintain registration, the quality systems must be proven, and continuous improvement must take place.

Requirements of the registrar

During the registration audit, Johnson was not in total compliance with the implemented quality system. The registration firm issued a number of minor findings during the audit. These findings, deficiencies classified as nonsystemic, had to be addressed prior to the firm's next scheduled surveillance audit. Failure to address ongoing improvements could result in a major finding and could endanger the registration.

These findings were resolved at the Johnson facilities by using the corrective action system required by ISO 9000. First, the quality assurance manager assigned the findings to the respective ISO Steering Council members for corrective action. The manager then conducted a follow-up to determine if the corrective action was effectively implemented. At this point, the quality assurance manager notified the registrar that the findings had been resolved. The registrar then verified the corrective action during the first surveillance audit.

Johnson continuously reviews its business processes for improvement. Existing procedures are changed, and the revision is fully implemented along with any required training. The effectiveness of this improvement is then monitored by the Steering Council during its monthly review meetings.

Requirements of ISO 9001

ISO 9001 requires a management review. At a minimum, the standards recommend that the review should examine the results of an internal audit process; the key words are *recommend* and *minimum.* The management review process determines the effectiveness of the entire quality system, and as a result, the Johnson Corp. conducts monthly management review meetings. The meetings include a review of the internal audit results from the previous month, customer complaints, corrective actions, and continuous improvement activities. Also reviewed are the company's quality objectives that ensure the direction of the quality management system is maintained.

ISO 9001 requires an internal audit process for compliance with the standard and the respective quality management system for the business. Auditing, treated as an improvement

tool, must be used to determine both compliance and effectiveness. It facilitates process improvement by identifying weak segments in process chains. Johnson conducts internal audits on each department twice a year in addition to the surveillance audit conducted by the registrar. Johnson has found that lack of compliance or poor effectiveness indicates one or more of the following items:

- The process has changed, and the procedures were not updated.
- Additional training is required.
- Outside influences are causing the process to vary.
- The process is not producing satisfactory results required for internal and external customers.

The internal audit process is conducted by the quality assurance manager. However, audits of the Quality department are conducted by an independent auditor within the company. The reviewer issues audit results to the various department heads, who are responsible for developing and implementing corrective action. Follows-ups are later made by the auditor to determine the effectiveness of corrective actions. The internal audit process has been well received by company members because of the benefits realized by its implementation.

Is ISO enough?

This question might be considered after an organization has invested time and money in obtaining registration. The Johnson Corp. answers the question with an emphatic NO! Johnson uses the ISO 9001 registration as a platform for progress. There are three major reasons that the registration is not the end of the road: competition, product registration in Europe, and continuous improvement for our customers.

Competition and the need for continuous improvement are synonymous. The success of an organization's quality movement is contingent on raising the company's expectations of its product and service performance. Process analysis must become the norm in order to stay ahead of the competition. This analysis must be based on statistical data derived from internal operations, customer expectations of quality performance, and customer feedback. Continuous improvement must be planned rather than reactionary.

The ISO 9000 standards are a solid foundation for any continuous improvement process. The standards support this process by formalizing a methodology to verify that products and services meet established quality levels. If the quality system is properly designed and implemented, an organization can use it to improve its business, not only to satisfy an ISO 9000 requirement.

Johnson also uses the ISO 9000 registration as a criterion for obtaining product registration in Europe. Its products are sold and regulated in Europe and require product registration. This registration is promoted by an ISO 9000-certified quality management system.

Conclusion

The Johnson Corp. has used the registration of its quality management system as a platform for progress. However, simply achieving registration is the easy part of the ISO 9000 process. The real work, the continuous improvement process, begins at completion of the registration.

Rose is employed by the Johnson Corp., 805 Wood St., Three Rivers, MI 49093-1053.