

ISO 9000 registration—avoiding unnecessary procedures

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ISO registration is possible without excessive costs. There are some items one can do with no outside assistance to reduce internal and external costs.

My job as a registrar is to tell people about the benefits of ISO 9000 and the improvements their company can expect. The topic I am addressing today is new for me, because my company is primarily an auditing body. We go to companies looking for documented procedures. There are 20 elements of the ISO standard, and we look for at least 20 procedures to complement those critical elements of the standard. There are also critical processes we expect to see documented to some degree whether they are procedures or alternatives.

In considering the subject of my presentation, I asked myself certain questions. What does the audience really want to hear? Do they want to learn how to streamline their processes? Are they concerned about cost effectiveness? Finally I realized that the topic of interest was obtaining ISO 9000 registration without spending an extensive amount of money.

Everyone has heard horror stories that obtaining ISO 9000 registration can cause bankruptcy. Since this is definitely not true, this presentation will give some idea of internal and external costs. I also hope to provide a route to obtain registration successfully and perhaps use certain short cuts.

DO IT YOURSELF

We have all heard the common adage. If you want something done properly, do it yourself. The same holds true for ISO 9000. Everyone has a field of expertise. In that field, the experts know the business and the processes. There is no individual better than an owner—a process owner—who is involved with the industry to know the industry better. He is the best person to do the work himself. The difficulty is to separate normal daily operations from documented and controlled processes one has.

The ISO standard is nothing new. It is a ten-page document for the 20 elements mentioned above. Examining it closely, one will notice that cost of quality is absent. This is also nothing new in industry for quality elements. To do something yourself successfully or do it within a company, there are some keys to consider to avoid the wrong path. You do not want to begin with streamlined or targeted goals.

TRAINING

The ISO 9000 standard has nothing new concerning training. It approaches the elements of training on a system level. It seeks the various elements and asks you to have a system in place to make the process flow. Until now, many quality programs did not address the elements at a system level. Considering training in the ISO 9000 series standard will provide a significant benefit by streamlining and correcting what you are going to implement. Auditor training will be critical, since auditing is probably an extremely critical area of self preparation for ISO 9000 registration.

There are alternatives such as work groups within companies and various areas of the country. The American Society for Quality Control (ASQC) almost every month offers work groups featuring guest speakers. This is an excellent resource. Networking is another effective resource. Some industries have formed partnerships of companies pursuing ISO registration. These groups meet periodically to examine the elements and discuss implementing ISO. Such alternatives give do-it-yourselfers help to enforce, clarify, and strengthen the implementation of ISO 9000.

There is an additional alternative—brainpicking. This is the customer calling the registrar. Of approximately 30–35 telephone calls I receive each day, five or ten of the calls are what I classify as brainpicking by potential or

existing customers. They say, "Dave, we have a particular situation here. We do not understand the intent of a certain element. Can you clarify what is necessary to satisfy the intent of the standard?"

My company is not a consulting firm. It is a registrar. We cannot offer consulting services. Clarification of the standard and interpretation of the standard is within our realm, however. We even encourage this. The more help we provide companies to understand the standard and its interpretation or the interpretation that we as a registrar or an assessment body have significantly improves the level to which you are implementing the standard within your company.

TOTAL COST

Internal cost is an item one must consider. It is necessary to address all elements of the standard and all areas within a company to which the elements are applicable. Internal cost in my mind is approximately 90% of the total cost. External cost accounts for the remaining 10%. It is the actual cost you pay the registrar to do the registration.

A company may also proclaim itself as ISO 9000 compliant after a self review. This is a good step that I have seen several companies do. It is not acceptable for the registration accreditation scheme or for customer requirements. It can be a successful first step, however, and has a minimal cost.

Internal costs will vary since they can include some existing procedures, documentation, etc. The 90% cost factor may be unrealistic unless you are starting from ground zero. One can probably use approximately 75% of existing items.

INTERNAL COST

There are a variety of items that will contribute to internal costs. The first one is the policy statement. It should be clear, direct, and measurable. As part of the management review, you must provide an itemized list of your quality objectives and your policy statements. Then you can say how you as an organization or company measure yourselves. The policy statement therefore needs to be a well-considered statement defining a clear process. It also needs to be something employees can relate to.

When we go through the facility and talk to people about their quality policy and the philosophies of the company, we will know if the policy statement is too complex for them. We will find they do not relate to the policy. If the individuals within the company can support the philosophies of the company, however, they support the system.

PROCEDURES

The procedure level is where the bulk of one's effort will occur. There are several alternatives that you have for procedures that may be more streamlined or more cost-effective. Here we should determine what is necessary and what is not necessary. Good flow charts can supplement procedures. Minimum flow charts will not satisfy the intent of determining how a process operates or identifying how a process operates. A procedure will accomplish the task as will a detailed flow chart.

Particular types of business may sometimes choose to use a log traveler to define the business. If the flow charts or log traveler refer to supporting documents, specifications, or parameters, they are acceptable to the audit team. The team will know how to find the limits of your system.

Put in place whatever tools you feel are beneficial or work best within your company. Do not restrict or confound yourself by saying you need 35 or 40 mandatory procedures. Think about your processes and think about your critical steps—the elements of the standard. Then you can opt for items that really would satisfy an audit trail or help an auditor to feel comfortable that you have documented processes in place.

The work instruction level document is a tool to help individuals performing specific tasks determine how they are going to accomplish that task. Control drawings can accomplish the same thing. If you are receiving prints from customers, you can use them as a form of work instruction. It is also possible to use visual standards as work instructions, if there is an inspection spot where you are determining whether boxes are compliant. You may have an assembled box with squareness and color and text and everything else. These are all tools that it is possible to use.

Our organization also has multilingual companies as clients especially in the electronics industry. Here visual standards are ideal because there is no language barrier to consider. Everyone can relate to the visual standards. These are only a few tools one can use for work instructions.

It is necessary to have adequate training for the ISO 9000. An ISO overview for individuals of the companies makes employees feel it is not merely a new quality program or a new idea being jammed down their throats. Then they can really understand that the ISO 9000 is a quality system to start with and an opportunity to improve within the company. Although it is necessary to have the internal training of the individuals to whatever degree is necessary, one must consider the internal audi-

tor training or training of the individuals who will be the facilitators to drive the ISO 9000.

INTERNAL AUDITOR TRAINING

Much material is available for internal audits. There are also texts and books available to help companies set up audit programs. A documentation tool kit is also available. This is a handbook that talks about the standard and the interpretation of the standard. Formal training programs are also available. These go as far as having certified and accredited lead auditors within your company. Although one must determine the suitability of this, internal audits will require staffing by individuals who have the appropriate training and know how to do internal audits.

EXTERNAL COSTS

When considering the registrar or assessment body that will come into your organization, what is the charge and what do they deliver? The first item to review is the quality manual. Since the new revision of the standard now requires that companies have a quality manual, the quality manual review is the first step. This is the first deliverable done during the process. This is not something that has to be done at the point where everything else is entirely in place. We recommend it be done when it is developed. If we have any concerns, it is possible to revise your policy statements within your quality manual or incorporate the answers at the procedure level.

The quality manual review is really the first step of the process. For companies that are doing ISO 9000 registration or putting the system in place on their own, I would highly recommend going through a preassessment with the registration body. This will provide a full benchmark or baseline for the status of the company internally.

The registration audit is the last step of the assessment before the actual registration occurs. The registrar comes to do a reaudit of the entire area. That includes all elements and all areas according to the standard—either 9001 or 9002—depending on whether it includes design.

ACCREDITATION FEES

Accreditation fees are those associated with the various accreditation bodies throughout the world. We as a registrar have to pay the accreditation body fees to post the registration. We pass them on to the individual companies. These are the costs associated with the registrar.

There is a definite time line. At the beginning when you are initiating your pursuit of ISO 9000, a critical item is management decision. We have seen companies with only a quality manager trying to drive the program. It does not go very far especially during the registration

audit. This is because the first element we review is management responsibility. It is obvious at that point whether management is behind the driving force of installing ISO 9000 or implementing ISO 9000 within the company. Again the quality manual is an initial step of the review process.

The depth to which training extends into the ranks of employees will affect the time. This will influence what you feel the standards require vs. the registrar interpretation of the standard. Procedure level documents would be the first working level documents with which you must work. That will probably take the longest time. The documentation and the implementation of work instructions will provide an opportunity to provide ownership to the individuals within your company to support this. Here is where “do it yourself” hits home.

When you go to the individuals who are performing the task and ask them to document how they are doing their steps or what they are doing as far as their deliverables or their service, you find whether they buy into the system. This is when you have them document the processes they are doing. Someone mentioned they began initially by only documenting what they did. They found that was not adequate because there was some variance with multifacility locations. This is where management has an opportunity to examine what is being documented and what is being said to determine if that is really where you want your company to be or where you want that particular function to operate.

It is an opportunity for employees to document what they are doing and an opportunity for management to decide if it is correct. After implementing the work instruction and the procedure level documents, one can start to develop an internal auditor. Although internal auditor requirements are necessary, you want to begin with audits. Before we would come in as an auditor, we would require a minimum of one complete internal audit cycle in all areas. Then we would look for a full internal audit cycle as part of one of our minimum requirements with internal audit element of the standard. The preassessment audit is the benchmark or baseline that we as a registrar can perform. It is an extremely valuable tool particularly for the “do-it-yourselfers,” because they can spend the time and effort putting in place what they feel is adequate and necessary for ISO 9000. They can forget fine tuning.

Call the registrar or somebody to give an honest benchmark or baseline before spending enormous amounts of time trying to fine tune processes. There may be major holes in the system where one could better place time and effort. Even the processes one feels may require fine tuning may be adequate for the standard.

If you read the standard, it is the template. It does not tell you exactly how to accomplish anything. It gives a minimum from which to work. The continuing maintenance or activity of a registration after completing the audit is a three-year registration posting through most registrars. My organization considers it as a sustaining registration so we can do surveillance at intervals over the course of the three years. If there is maintenance of the system, we reissue certification at the end of the third year.

CONCLUSION

This discussion should have offered some help on the do-it-yourself approach. It also included the necessary documents and the type of internal works you would expect within an organization to achieve ISO 9000. TJ

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Editor's note: This article is from a taped transcript of the remarks Swazey presented at the 1995 TAPPI International Corrugating Conference.



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