



Quality time

Quality Management looks set to be an ever more integral part of mainstream business activity with the latest revisions to the ISO 9001 standard, says Nick Berzins, General Manager, FileExpert Document Management

Forward thinking, competitive businesses will have clearly defined processes for dealing with their customers, suppliers, employees and the delivery of their products and services. They'll also continually review these processes.

For many, this leads to an obvious step to a formal certification such as ISO 9001. It's often a stipulation in business tenders or supply chain questionnaires and is essential for those that wish to work globally or with regulated industries. If you are already one of the million-plus companies globally that is certified to ISO 9001 or you are now considering registering your business, you'll probably be looking at the latest revisions in the ISO 9001:2015.

The new version replaces the ISO 9001:2008. ISO says the revisions "take into account the different challenges that businesses now face. For example,

increased globalisation has changed the way we do business and organisations often operate more complex supply chains, and there are increased expectations from customers."

While the changes certainly recognise the need to make the certification a much more agile business tool, for most it will mean: more extensive planning, a significant mind shift about how the standard is viewed internally and - perhaps the biggest challenge of all - a new way of working with business documents. It's no longer an action that can be delegated solely to one individual; it now involves multiple individuals.

In fact whether you are committed to the certification or not, there are several aspects of it that you must consider for your business today. No-one can argue that a clearly defined and documented management system

is essential to maintain competitive advantage.

KEY CHANGES SUMMARISED

ISO 9001:2015 includes a number of significant changes. Perhaps one of the first challenges will be to ensure busy business leaders own the quality management processes, rather than one individual. It will be essential to overcome any resistance as there is more focus on bringing the standard into the entire context of the organisation. It requires you to clearly identify and understand the internal and external factors that impact your organisation.

You will need to look at business risks and opportunities and how you will integrate and implement your actions into your management system processes. Every action must also be monitored, managed and communicated across the organisation. You will need to have the resources to ensure you can implement, maintain and continually improve your quality management system. Employees must also be aware of the quality policy, understand the role they play and the implications of not conforming.

Particularly interesting is the

“WHILE THE CHANGES CERTAINLY RECOGNISE THE NEED TO MAKE THE CERTIFICATION A MUCH MORE AGILE BUSINESS TOOL, FOR MOST IT WILL MEAN: MORE EXTENSIVE PLANNING, A SIGNIFICANT MIND SHIFT ABOUT HOW THE STANDARD IS VIEWED INTERNALLY AND - PERHAPS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF ALL - A NEW WAY OF WORKING WITH BUSINESS DOCUMENTS. IT'S NO LONGER AN ACTION THAT CAN BE DELEGATED SOLELY TO ONE INDIVIDUAL; IT NOW INVOLVES MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS.”



introduction of a new term, "Documented information". This means you will now need to think beyond confirming your procedures as standalone documents. You must now also maintain documented information about each defined business process and ensure that everyone that needs to, can access this information easily. Unsurprisingly, you will then need to be able to monitor, measure and evaluate when data should be analysed and provide documented information as evidence of your actions.

THE REALITY OF THE CHANGES

At FileExpert, we believe the revisions have certainly enabled the standard to become a much more agile business improvement tool and it is now more relevant to business operations today. The updated requirements to manage "documented information" now offer more flexibility in the types of documentation that can be included. However, with the amount of material you will be required to track and audit, the only practical way to manage it effectively is with a computerised system. A manual approach will no longer suffice.

It's essential to view the standard as a strategic activity. As a result, any additional investments required, such as a digital ECM system, can be evaluated within a broader business context. On a positive note, an investment in a good document management or ECM system will benefit the business in many other ways, beyond winning ISO 9001 certification. It will bring increased productivity, better document control and create more time to focus on your customer needs.

It's also essential that you do not underestimate the mind shift that will be required in some organisations. Senior business leaders are expected to be more involved than they have generally been previously.

It's also time to say 'bye-bye' to the lever-arch file, packed full of process diagrams, that is gathering dust on a shelf. The revisions mean that ISO 9001 is no longer the 'tick box' exercise to win new clients, which, for some, it may have been before. Employees will need to understand how to effectively manage their business critical documents and buy-into any new ways of storing their work.

WHERE TO START

To get more familiar with the changes, there are lots of useful resources online. We've found the ISO and BSI websites a good place to start. We recommend you tackle the elements that will have the biggest positive impact upon the business first. These will help to win the hearts and minds of the employees and leaders that you need to get on board. If like, many organisations, you are introducing a DM or ECM system, start your search now. Choose a tool that organises, manages and tracks information and processes associated with quality and compliance activities. Also ensure your supplier will get you up and running quickly, helping you to demonstrate the benefits it can bring to the business as a whole. Finally, if you want to meet the deadline of September 2018, start now, it's just 27 months away. And if you don't, you can still benefit from taking a look at the revised standard. The significance it places on reviewing your business processes is a positive step towards securing happy employees, satisfied customers and business growth.

More info: www.fileexpert.co.uk