

# ISO 9001: A seal to be earned!

Employed as a "Best Practices" model, ISO 9001 relies a great deal on the philosophy of the "Plan-Do-Check-Act" (PDCA), an iterative four-step problem solving process for a continuous improvement cycle in order to achieve the requirements. This process approach centers around eight quality management principles used as a guide in improving the performance while identifying the main elements needed in a good quality system. The eight principles include:

1. Customer Focus
2. Leadership
3. Involvement of People
4. Process Approach
5. Systems Approach to Management
6. Continuous improvement
7. Factual Approach to Decision-Making
8. Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationship

Successful small business professionals understand that business grow only by providing quality products and outstanding customer service. Many small businesses are deeply involved in various aspects of industrial automation and have used certification to ISO 9001 to meet goals, enhance competitiveness, and expand their market share. The independent verification of the commitment to continually improving quality and customer satisfaction provides the differentiation needed to drive sales and increase profit margins. Yet, some

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industrial executives continue to question the relevance and cost-justification of acquiring the ISO 9001 stamp. The result of the constant scrutiny is the latest update to the standard, ISO 9001:2008 quality management systems, that looks at requirements with limited changes made to the standard. The review process of ISO 9001:2008 however, was a rigorous exercise, following the extremely positive feedback to the 2001 edition.

Four reasons why ISO 9001 continues to be relevant

Over the last two decades, ISO 9001 is a standard that has come to be ingrained in the business community. Its importance and impact on the way businesses are conducted is an important study that should be undertaken or many businesses would strive for certification to the standard for many wrong reasons. Acquiring an ISO 9001 is not as much about the certificate in itself as it is about trying to implement the best possible quality management systems and processes. Working towards a continual

improvement is the aim of an ISO 9001, yet there is always a possibility that those businesses that do not understand this underlying motto of the standard would lose interest and enthusiasm in improving, the moment the certificate was in hand.

Certification to ISO 9001 delivers value to firms involved in industrial automation. This value is not just financial, although an important factor. As technology evolves, factories become smaller and production gets more localized. In order to ensure dependable quality, one must put into action repeatable processes that are consistent and flexible. By encouraging the changes that affect bottom line performance, ISO 9001 improves the operation of an entire organization.

ISO 9001 is universally recognized, valued and established. In many industries, a certification to the standard becomes an unspoken condition for any tender or contract bid. For companies in these industries, many involving industrial automation, the standard is more than just relevant, it is required to conduct business.

Certification to ISO 9001 is the first step to a wide range of standards, from ISO 14001 for environmental management to OHSAS 18001 for occupational health and safety, and beyond. It can become the foundation of an organization's drive to be more efficient and effective, and open the door to constant improvement at all levels of the business.

In these days of economic uncertainty, every business aims to create a more efficient and cost effective operation, while improving their customer relations and corporate reputation, and maintaining a healthy bottom line.

BSI helps many small businesses pursue ISO 9001 certification as a way to grow their business and distinguish themselves from other industrial providers. The decision to become ISO 9001 certified is often driven by the need to be more competitive in markets where increasingly there are demands for proof of a viable quality management system.

## Building a Stable Process

Developing the processes and procedures for ISO 9001 certification ensures reliable product quality, simplifies supplier evaluation and enhances customer satisfaction. Additionally, third-party certification increases eligibility for contracts requiring ISO 9001. For several BSI industrial clients, it is a fact that an ISO 9001 certification gives potential clients and customers alike an impression that a serious management system is in place and that there is a sharp focus on providing quality services and products to customers.

Robert Whitcher, Product Manager, BSI, has over 34 years of experience in

increasing the quality of a variety of industries through the improvement of business processes, development of standards and oversight of certification procedures. According to Whitcher, "Many of our clients report significant improvements in customer satisfaction as well as service delivery after certification to ISO 9001. An increase in profitability has also been confirmed. Through independent studies conducted in the U.S. and Europe, it is clear that the average profitability of organizations certified to ISO 9001 is higher than the average for non-certified customers. This is true for businesses of all sizes."

Few certification organizations offer a comprehensive solution for small business including training, assessment and certification services. With the highest number of full-time auditors of certification bodies, and skilled instructors from a variety of industries, BSI provides a continuity of service that saves time and money. BSI also offers scalable solutions that can increase the performance of a single division or the entire enterprise, depending on the needs of the organization.

Martin Zwilling, an entrepreneur in Residence, Arizona State University and Thunderbird School of Global Management, as well as CEO and Founder of Startup Professionals Inc., a leading consultancy that helps new companies attract investors, believes that the best way to establish and maintain an ISO 9001 quality management system is to automate it as much as possible. Zwilling recommends, "Start with a simple document management system. The keystone of all ISO 9001 standards is a documented quality management system, which consists of an interlocked set of

documented objectives for a company, documented processes and training to achieve these objectives, and documented results that show acceptable delivery and continuous improvement." According to Zwilling, the importance of an ISO 9001 registration is increasing the world marches towards a more global economy. "For new companies, especially those outside the United States, ISO 9001 registration has become a condition of entry into the world market, as well as a clear competitive differentiator," says Zwilling.

Clearly, with the right reasons in mind, ISO 9001 is a certificate to go for... and get!

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