

Three Most Effective Principles of Management

So, you've come to a point where you're having to consider implementing a Quality Management System, and are feeling unsure about this decision, about the cost, the amount of inconvenience you're hearing comes with it, and the problem you're hearing it is to maintain it after you've become registered. Recognize that you are not alone; these decisions are being considered all over the world.

The globalization of industry and the inherent difficulties of logistics and communication involved, makes using internationally ratified quality management systems registration the only proven effective way to ensure vendor accountability for consistent quality product upon receipt, but this is only the benefit for the customer.

Deriving benefit from a Quality Management System within your own organization is the sometimes "untapped" benefit and is wholly inherent on four primary aspects. Implementation, Evaluation, Communication and Maintenance, all of which we'll discuss here.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are two ways to do this. One is that your organization can utilize the existing internal knowledge and self-implement. The effectiveness of this choice is based specifically on the background and experience of the persons you make responsible for this project. If they've performed this before on the new standards, then most likely, understanding intuitively your business, they can do this. If on the other hand, there exists limited or no such internal experience, it is a wise decision to hire a well-chosen consultant. The time saved, and the benefits of the tools provided, the training performed, and the experience and ability of a consultant to ensure that the four primary aspects are covered, ensures you a very fair return on your investment. If you choose well... but that's another subject.

No matter what direction you decide, effective implementation will require that there be internal communication initiated to "sell" this directive. Too often organizations focus on communicating the ISO decision to customers and almost completely forget to do it internally. The result is almost always misunderstandings about the motive (Why the increased accountability?), the purpose (Increasing efficiency = decreasing positions?), and unfortunately no real "buy-in" being ever secured. In some cases there would appear to be sabotage. You have to answer these unasked questions in this and all subsequent internal communications, and you have to be subtle about it. The Quality Policy and the Quality Objectives and the manner in which you determine and implement these can effectively bridge this difficulty.

Throughout here you will see "communication" used. The four primary aspects being discussed are actually three with Communication threaded between them. The difference between the old standards (1994 ISO9000 based using 20+ Elements) and the new

ISO9001: 2000 is not only the decrease to eight “Clauses”, but the direct foundational effect of the Eight Principles, which are available on this site.

Once you’ve initiated the internal communication, decisions are required on the type and extent of ISO procedures needed. Are there exclusions to any procedures that can be identified? How will all parties communicate about progress on assigned duties resulting from the gap between the ISO requirements and how your organization currently functions? I’m sure you’ve been told that this version of ISO is “looser” with more room for flexibility, but it still has the “shalls”, and any shall always is a requirement that you will have to be able to present objective evidence to satisfy, unless you are excluded. It is true that there is more flexibility and that the Third Party Auditors are now trained to look for evidence of compliance rather than for nonconformances, but the new standard is specifically **process-based**. (See *Eight Quality Principles* on this site)

This term, process-based, means that each “link” in your organization’s functions, from Sales to the Dock, and from the Dock to Accounting, should be identified, planned, show evidence of controlled information transfer and communication, have records that are controlled, and that each step within these processes understands the importance of their place and responsibility, as well as what’s going on with ISO.

Now with communication done, and the Quality Procedures and the Quality Manual written, the Quality Policy posted, and the Quality Objectives decided and communicated, the rest is project management. You’ll want to ensure that the tools selected for tracking the action items identified during the procedure development stages are being used, and that the tasks are being completed, as once you’re near the completion of those tasks, you can arrange to have your selected internal auditors trained and begin performing internal audits.

With the closing of the internal audit nonconformances, and once those responsible for this project feel that the processes are capable, you’ll be ready for your Registration Audit.

EVALUATION

In the previous versions of the ISO Standards the use of statistics was largely considered an exclusion that required only evidence that there was not a need for statistics. The standard was not specific about what needed to be measured, what was expected as a result of the measurements, and what evidence a Third Party Auditor would expect to see. Whereas, the new ISO based Standards state that organizations, “**shall** apply...methods to monitor and measure the Quality Management System processes...demonstrate ability to achieve planned results, (and)...when results are not achieved corrective and corrective action **shall** be taken.”

This difference, like the communication requirements, was a very intelligent one. Not only did it address the primary complaint spoken about the previous ISO Standards not showing a return on the investment, but it made the addition of the Continuous

Improvement Clause a natural addition, as, if you are measuring you're seeing the information from the operation that identifies areas needing improvement, and naturally you'll make the decisions, based on resources, that will ensure correction and improvement. Now, it only has to be evidenced.

When determining the measurements to be taken, remember that the Quality Objectives have to be measurable, and as such are a source for statistical data, as are the nonconformances written, the product inspections performed, and the data gained through Customer solicitation (also a new ISO requirement). This information, when shared publicly with your staff and employees is also an excellent catalyst for buy-in. Once individuals recognize that their effectiveness is being measured and improvements (or shortcomings) are being publicly displayed, they will demonstrate the incentive to become involved, and take ownership for maintaining or improving what evidences. You just have to be sure that they are trained to understand what is posted, or that the choice of tools and notes provided on the tools are clear enough for simple comprehension.

MAINTENANCE

Putting it simply, this means not only keeping up appearances, but improving on them as well. Here is where the real return on investment evidences.

To be effective, the channels of communication have to be fervently maintained, even when the players change. There should be an active embracing of the new participants, and tools or methods to get them in step no matter what role they play in the organization. Oftentimes, it requires nothing more than an explanation and inclusion, other times it requires formal training on the Quality Management System procedural requirements and assistance until they have assumed full responsibility for their role in the quality management program. Either way, it's "Top Management's responsibility" to ensure that these processes as well as the other required management responsibilities are effective.

With effective maintenance implementation, the Quality Management System evidences maturity. Tools and processes are evaluated for continuing suitability; those proving ineffective are either improved or discarded with verification. The feedback coming from the operations shows the development of a proactive culture with suggestions coming from employees for improvement, statistical information reflecting trends that may require active effort for resolution planning, and the development of incentives (always a by-product of successful employee involvement), as well as the byproduct of more effective supply chain management. Externally, vendors and customers will be easier accessed and retained, and the costs involved in all areas will relatively decrease, and decreased cost is a measurable return.

Within an effective Maintenance Program the maturation process ensures that the system becomes less of a program and more part of the mainstream culture.

We understand how daunting this may all seem and we invite you to contact us to see how Integrated Management Systems can simplify the whole process at a cost less than what your organization would incur internally.