BS EN ISO 9001: Quality Management Systems – Requirements

What you need to know about complying with ISO 9001

What’s it all about?
This was the first of the Management System Standards to be written, and was originally published as BS5750 in the late 70’s. It was heavily criticised at the time, but as the UK government had backed its development it was gradually forced down through the supply chain ignoring most opposition. Several versions later ISO 9001, 2008 is much easier to comply with and has less reliance on paperwork and documentation.

A 2015/16 version is in the planning stages, and is rumoured to have even less reliance on documented processes, the onus being placed instead on assessing the risks and dangers to your business of poorly controlled or inconsistent processes. This is a further evolution of the standard rather than completely new thinking, and continues the move away from a reliance on documentation and written work instructions toward the genuine risks to most businesses.

Why would my business want approval against this standard?
This standard is almost mandatory if you want to sell into government or local government based organisations.
The same is true for many larger procurement organisations.
Tenders – most tenders now ask about this standard. Being able to give a positive answer and show that you are certified by a UKAS accredited certification body will give you more points during the tender adjudication, and improving your chances of winning.

Many procurement organisations now have quality and performance monitors/targets in place which can include the performance of their suppliers and sub-contractors. So your customer may be reliant on your performance to meet THEIR targets, formal objectives and targets can help here.

Unlike Environmental or Health and Safety Management, Quality has few if any legislative requirements. But poor or inconsistency quality of products/services can cause your customers to go elsewhere. Despite customer satisfaction surveys etc. it can then be very difficult to find out why they moved on. An ISO 9001 based Quality Management System should make sure you know the state of the goods or services you are delivering.
How long would it take us to become approved?

That depends on what you do and how you do it! But, we can often produce a unique Quality Management System, written around your business, audit its implementation to ensure compliancy, and then get it certified by an accredited body with 5-6 days of our help. Implementation can be completed over 6-8 weeks or less.

What am I likely to need to do?

The starting place for a quality system, is to define what you wish to achieve in a Policy Statement which is then approved by the company’s senior management. The policy statement must linked to measureable objectives, which will show how your system, and business is performing.

A top level manual explaining the system needs to be produced, showing its composition and how it links to supporting documents. There are then six procedures which have to be written and implemented (mandatory requirements of ISO 9001). Other working practices may need to be documented if their control is essential to for consistent products or services to be generated. The mandatory documented procedures are:

- Document & Data Control
- Record Control
- Control of Non-compliance
- Corrective Action
- Preventive Action
- Internal Audit

The expected content of each of these procedures is given in the standard itself.

What is this likely to cost?

Our fees are based on a day rate. The number of days are based on your activities, but are typically 5-6 days for a small business. Certification by a UKAS approved body is likely to cost £4,500 for a three year certificate.

For more details and assistance in gaining the necessary certifications contact ISO Consultants.