

Why Certification?

It's Optional

There is no requirement in the Standard for an organisation complying with it to become certified. An organisation whose customers are not demanding third party certification can still adopt the Standards as a guideline for their management system - there are many real benefits possible: reduced operating costs, increased customer satisfaction and repeat sales, increased profitability and competitiveness, and increased security.

Certification is usually adopted as a goal - and an ongoing strategy - only when insisted upon by a key client, as a qualification to supply. A clear risk with this motivation is, of course, that the Quality Assurance System will become a "trophy", rather than a strategy for increased efficiency. Such a trophy can quickly become tarnished, and most systems set up for this purpose alone will not be effectively used.

Internal Audit Focus

By having independent external auditors whose purpose is to ensure that the system continues to conform to the Standard, the focus of internal audits can change. Obviously, they also should monitor conformance - however, they can now become interested in other questions, such as:

- "Does this make sense?"
- "Is there a better way of doing this?"
- "Are there opportunities for improvement?"
- "What good things are done here that can be done elsewhere?"

Audit Consolidation

In addition, Certification provides the opportunity to tell suppliers that the Quality Assurance system has been independently confirmed as complying with the requirements of the Standard. This can have three spin-offs:

- ✎ It can give your organisation an advantage in competing with others that are not independently confirmed.
- ✎ It can qualify you as a bidder, then a supplier, where such Certification is a condition of supply.
- ✎ Most importantly, it can prevent constant requests from a host of customers for the opportunity to conduct "second party" audits. The Standard does prevent an organisation from rejecting these requests; however, offering evidence of independent Certification will often be satisfactory to customers of the suitability of the quality system.

A "Helping Hand"

Third Party Certification provides independent confirmation that every aspect of the Standard has been addressed. This means that most major aspects of the management system - and most normal business risks - have been evaluated and dealt with in a systematic way.

The existence of such an independent, third party assessment of performance means that a company can focus on long term objectives, rather than on self-evaluation. Whilst self-assessment is useful, it can be time consuming, and can distract from the key tasks of running the business.

Independent auditors also provide a "helping hand" to detect deficiencies in the system. After initial Certification, the procedures will continue to change, and the regular audits and re-certifications will ensure that the system continues to meet the standard, and set a constant baseline against which improvement can occur.

It pays to remember your social obligations. If you don't go to other people's funerals, they won't go to yours.