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What's after ISO9001?

Now you've achieved ISO 9001, what's next? Surely there has got to be something more. One of the most important guiding principles of ISO 9001 is continuous improvement. Yet for a number of reasons continuous improvement is sometimes overlooked. This can be because it is felt to be too difficult to implement, too hard to manage or just simply too difficult to set up suitable and effective corrective action.

Frequently organisations lack clarity on the strategy, tactics and approach open to them. Worse still, they often know nothing of the advantages continuous improvement can deliver: potential savings to their organisation for a start.

One approach that is gaining enormous interest around these issues is Six Sigma. However, whilst enormously successful Six Sigma can still involve big projects, big schemes and big resource investments (including training and managing) - maybe a scale too large (a bridge too far). Consequently organisations, whilst still looking for return on their quality management system and quality training investment, would like to see something shorter, sharper and quicker. But this does not necessarily mean short term and transient.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) may have a role to play at this juncture. RCA is a much smaller scale approach to problem solving, but no less effective in providing dramatic results

Root Cause Analysis a definition: "An objective, thorough and disciplined methodology employed to determine the most probable underlying causes of problems and undesired events within an organisation with the aim of formulating and agreeing corrective actions to at least mitigate if not eliminate those causes and so produce significant long term performance improvement."

A successful approach to introduce RCA into your organisation is to use a training course that involves both training in the RCA approach and the keys tools PLUS the help and support of the trainer whilst the trainees undertake a RCA project within their organisation. The coordination involves some part-time activities, including a company RCA coordinator, a RCA project sponsor and external support.

Organisations benefit from this particular approach to RCA in a number of ways.

The organisations can make (often very significant) savings from the RCA project. The organisation and trainees learn and grow in confidence from successfully completing an RCA project. In short, success breeds success. Other potential trainees enthused by these RCA projects now wish to attend the course and managers want to spread the work inside their organisation.

If you would like further information about Root Cause Analysis, please visit <http://www.root-cause-analysis.co.uk>

Free advice for Manufacturing Companies

The Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) is to offer all UK small and medium sized manufacturing firms up to four days free advice from April 2008. They will also offer an extended range of advice including:

- Strategic planning and skills development
- Sourcing materials, services and technology
- Management and operational advice on all aspects of company business
- Improving the performance and operation of the supply chain
- Improved resource efficiency in both energy and waste



The announcement was made by Margaret Hodge, UK Industry and Regions Minister. She said, “MAS has already delivered for many manufacturing firms, helping them boost productivity, improve turnover and invest for the future. This expansion builds on that success and offers our world class manufacturers a tremendous opportunity to secure long term competitive advantage. World class manufacturers require world class manufacturing support and with a Centre of Expertise in every region MAS is providing manufacturing companies with access to world class best practice, tailored to meet their individual needs. “

For further information visit www.dti.gov.uk

New CDM Regulations

The new Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 came into force on Friday 6th April. They focus on managing risks on construction sites, reducing paperwork, encouraging team work and getting the right people for the right job at the right time. The new regulations also aim to improve the level of health and safety performance in the construction industry. Stephen Williams, Chief Inspector of Construction HSE said “The industry has worked very closely with HSE to revise the CDM Regulations and ensure that there are clear benefits for all competent duty holders. The Regulations clarify responsibilities of each duty holder and require greater focus on the risks to be managed by all involved in the construction process. Underlying all the changes is one simple aim – to reduce the unacceptable number of fatalities and injuries in the construction industry”.

For further information visit www.hse.gov.uk

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction – a measure of customer happiness with the product and services provided a business; did these meet the customer’s expectations. Businesses aim to achieve high levels of satisfaction because satisfied customers are likely to be loyal and provide repeat business; they will also recommend the business to others. Poor levels of customer satisfaction mean that the business has to try very hard to reach new customers – those who haven’t heard of its reputation. Alternatively, the business may need to

reduce its prices to attract customers and this leads to lower margins. It can be shown that in financial terms it costs at least five times more to win a new customer than it does to keep a current one.

There is a virtuous circle for customer satisfaction that will drive a business forward.

- Good Customer Service
- Leads to Happy Customers
- Leads to Repeat Business
- Leads to Increased profits
- Leads to competing more effectively and this leads to better customer service.

Customers can be Internal or External, but in either case focusing on the customer (one of the principles of ISO9001) is good for business. In a competitive market, providing levels of customer service that is unique will differentiate you from your competitors and provide a competitive edge. However, your competitors will respond and gradually the level of service is ratcheted up and so you will need to continuously improve (another ISO9001 principle).

A new national standard for customer service has recently been launched. BS8477 – *Code of Practice for Customer Service* has been designed to provide good practice against which organisations can benchmark their customer service and differentiate themselves from competitors. Reducing customer defections can boost profits and yet in most cases organisations make no attempt to persuade dissatisfied customers to stay, even though in some cases a simple apology would have prevented them from moving to the competition.

The Standard covers the principles of good customer service and the obligations of top management, customer service management, customer service employees and other employees.

Top Ten Complaints

Recent figures released by Consumer Direct (the government’s telephone and online advice service) show the businesses that have most difficulty in achieving customer satisfaction. It has released figures for complaints in 2006. Each case recorded by Consumer Direct is logged using one of 453 product or service codes and this means that the service can build up a picture of the areas that are causing consumers the most problems. In total the service received 1.5 million telephone calls and e-mails in 2006, and this was a 79% increase over the

previous year. Christine Cryne, Director for Consumer Direct at the Office of Fair Trading said, "In 2006, Consumer Direct successfully extended its operations to cover the whole of Great Britain. By offering more people access to the service we have been able to gain greater intelligence about the main issues facing consumers".

Top Ten Complaints about specific Goods and Services in 2006

- 1 Second hand cars purchased from independent dealers
- 2 Mobile Phones (service agreements)
- 3 TVs
- 4 Other general building work
- 5 Mobile Phones (hardware)
- 6 Personal Goods and Services (other)
- 7 Car repairs and servicing from independent garages
- 8 Upholstered furniture
- 9 Fitted Kitchens
- 10 Second hand cars purchased from franchised dealers

These business areas would be advised to review their customer focus as well as complaints handling techniques.

Further information visit www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

UK Companies ahead of European Competitors

The DTI's 2007 Value Added Scoreboard, released in April, showed UK companies dominating the list, with 210 of the 750 biggest value adding, or wealth creating firms in Europe. Over the last four years, UK-based companies have had higher profitability, faster value-added growth and higher wealth creation efficiency than their French and German equivalents.

Companies of all sizes can use the DTI's value added calculator to check and set a benchmark for their own performance. Want to have a go, visit www.innovation.gov.uk/value_added

Safer GAP years?

The British Standards Institute (BSI) have launched a new standard BS8848 *A Specification for adventurous activities; expeditions, visits and fieldwork outside the UK*. It aims to reduce risk of

injury or illness and specifies requirements that have to be met by organisers of such trips. Nigel Gifford, an explorer and author, said "BS 8848 is applicable to adventurous people of all ages, no matter what their objectives and ambitions may be. The standard enables people to instantly recognise a professional operator that takes its responsibilities seriously in every aspect of the provision, management and delivery of the travel programme. BS8848 will instil confidence in those looking for adventure, safe in the knowledge that their travel is organised by a responsible provider".

Why 8848 – apparently this is the height of Mount Everest!

For further information about the standard, visit www.bsi-global.com

Kitemark for Road Signs

There is now a Kitemark scheme for road traffic signs to help manufacturers comply with the European Legislation EN12899-1. Under the Construction Products (CPD), road signs have been identified as "high risk" and must be independently assessed to gain the required CE mark in the near future. The Kitemark scheme mirrors the CPD requirements and means that manufacturers can get ahead and demonstrate due diligence in advance of the transition to CE marking. Steve Hamon, Head of Engineering at BSI said, "Manufacturers choose Kitemark because it offers them real competitive advantage. The Kitemark certification has been shown time and time again to lead to growth in revenue through customer confidence that can win more contracts, increased profit by allowing manufacturers to compete on quality and not price and reduce risk through a company's total commitment to safety."

For further information visit www.bsi-global/en/productservices/construction/road/road-signs

Engaging Small Businesses

The UK Government have launched the new Small Business Forum. It aims to provide an informal way for them to meet with the small business community and seek their views. Margaret Hodge, Minister for Industry and the Regions will chair the meetings. She said, "There are over four million small and medium enterprises in the UK today, 600,000 more than there were ten years ago. They account for more than half the turnover of the private sector,



employ 59% of the total private sector workforce so are vital to the health of our economy. The Government has always prided itself in its open dialogue with the business community and the Small Business Forum will be a new opportunity for me to regularly meet ten small business owners and each of the UK's main business membership bodies in an open and frank round table meeting". For further information and a list of Forum members visit www.dti.gov.uk

Climate Change Standard

ISO have recently launched ISO14065:2007 *Greenhouse gases – Requirements for greenhouse gas validation and verification bodies for in accreditation or other forms of recognition*. This is

a new addition to the ISO toolbox of standards addressing climate change issues. According to ISO, the objectives of ISO14064 (the standard that provides the requirements for organisations or persons to quantify and verify Greenhouse gas emissions) and ISO14065 are:

- To develop flexible, regime-neutral tools for use in voluntary or regulatory GHG schemes
- To promote and harmonise best practice
- To support the environmental integrity of GHG assertions
- To assist organisations to manage GHG-related opportunities and risks, and
- To support the development of GHG programmes and markets.

For further information visit www.iso.ch