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The main findings of the survey were:

World Quality Day

This year’s World Quality Day was 11 November and the Institute of Quality Assurance (IQA) celebrated the day with their ‘John Loxham Seminar’ and Awards Dinner. The speaker was Mike Low, director British Standards whose topic was ‘Do Standards set Quality’. The seminar was followed by the Awards dinner and presentations.

In the run up to World Quality Day, the IQA surveyed their members to develop an understanding of the place of quality in improving business. The results show a wide gap in the views and attitudes of business managers and quality professionals and demonstrated that quality practices need to be re-thought for 21st Century business. Frank Steer, Director General of the IQA said

Many business managers are failing to appreciate how quality can improve their business and work-life balance. They tend to equate quality management with certification and the quality of a manufactured product when in reality it covers every aspect of managing a business. It adds value and sharpens competitive edge.

- 58% agreed that quality practices need to be re-invented for the 21st century enterprise
- Over half (56%) think that most business managers do not see the benefit of having formal quality management processes and training
- 46% agreed that most quality professionals fail to translate their skills and processes into something that is relevant to business managers
- 90% agreed that if business managers and quality professionals understood each other better, British business would benefit
- 79% agreed that the key to closing the gap between quality professionals and business managers is education and training
- 94% agreed that a commitment to quality can deliver significant improvements in business performance
- 58% agreed that a commitment to formal quality management processes and training can deliver significant improvements in work-life balance
- 45% agreed that quality certification and affiliation is primarily a means of qualifying as a supplier.

To try and tackle some of the issues raised and demonstrate its commitment to the business community as a whole the IQA have developed the IQA Company Membership Scheme. This scheme will be

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launched on 2 December at Studley Castle in Warwickshire. Speakers include Ted Marra who will speak on 'Focusing on the future - revising our agenda for achieving business success' and Tauni Brooker who will speak on 'Rethinking reputational risk management'.

The scheme should help all businesses by ensuring that quality and business improvement is 'everybody's business' through the provision of a range of benefits and support with specialist training. If you would like to learn more about the scheme please visit www.iqa.org

Declaration of Conformity

A new ISO Standard - ISO/IEC 17050, defines the requirements for suppliers to meet when they make formal claims that products, services, systems, processes or materials conform to relevant standards or other specification. It offers a framework for what is designated technically as a "supplier's declaration of conformity".

ISO/IEC 17050-1:2004 Conformity assessment - Supplier's declaration of conformity (SDoC)- Part 1 General requirements, specifies the requirements for a SDoC, and includes a sample SDoC. ISO/IEC 17050-2:2004 Conformity assessment - Supplier's declaration of conformity - Part 2: Supporting documentation, covers the type of documentation required to back-up an SDoC and the intent is to encourage acceptance of an SDoC by customers. Further information can be found on www.iso.ch

Consumer Dissatisfaction

A report issued last month by the BSI showed that consumers were dissatisfied

with service levels and standards across many industry sectors. Call centres came out worst, with 64% of respondents saying that they believe that Call Centres have low standards. The sectors that UK Consumers believe to have the lowest standards are:

- Call centres 64%
- Builders 46%
- Estate Agents 44%
- Taxi/Cab operators 40%
- Plumbers 38%
- Mobile Phone operators 34%
- Utility Companies 34%

The survey also showed that 52% of consumers would pay more for quality and that 70% would be more likely to buy a product or service that had a quality mark. If you would like to find out more about this survey please visit www.bsi-global.com

Small Businesses Improve Email Security

According to a hosting provider (VIA), the number of infected emails is dropping even though the number of viruses has increased. This implies that email security is improving, especially amongst small businesses, who were previously blamed for proliferating viruses, often because they lacked security expertise. A Bank of Scotland survey carried out earlier this year found that 37% of UK businesses were being badly hit by viruses and spam, with 2% of businesses losing over £10,000/year as a result. VIA advises businesses to minimise the risk of infection by creating multiple layers of defence and they have compiled the following advice for small businesses:

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- Screen emailed viruses at the internet gateway by subscribing to your service provider's virus scanning service
- Educate staff as to the dangers of opening suspect email attachments
- Ensure that you have up to date virus protection software. Mobile and home workers are most vulnerable as they are often the last to have their systems updated.

For further information please visit www.Startups.co.uk

Health and Safety qualifications via Distance Learning

The NEBOSH National General Certificate is recognised as the standard qualification in health and safety for the non-safety specialist. It is designed to help those with health and safety responsibilities (e.g. managers, supervisors and representatives of health and safety) to carry out their duties and functions more effectively.

The aims of the NEBOSH National General Certificate are to:

- provide students with an understanding of health and safety concepts
- develop an appreciation of the need for health and safety and its control
- enhance students' awareness and help make the workplace safer
- improve productivity and reduce costs

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Identify common hazards and risks in the workplace and advise on suitable corrective actions

- Identify sources of guidance and advice on health and safety
- Assist in the preparation and regular review of an organisations health and safety policy
- Recommend suitable action to minimise risks
- Investigate accidents, prepare reports, make cost effective proposals to prevent recurrence
- Identify the main requirements of legislation and codes of practice
- Maintain records and information to advise management

The NEBOSH National General Certificate course is now available as a Distance Learning Package and is a collaborative effort between QM&T and ZBS. For information about this course please visit www.qmt.co.uk

New Website for Standards Information

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) have launched a new website. The site has general information on International Standards and Conformity Assessment including information the role these have in helping world trade. The site is cited in the "Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards" and should be used by those involved in trade and standardisation.

It also includes the standards catalogues of the ISO and IEC and has an enquiry service. For more information, please visit www.standardsinfo.net

Safer Roads

New digital road signs are appearing around the country. The Vehicle Activated Signs

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light up to warn drivers of hazards that they are approaching e.g. tight bends and if they are driving too quickly. Traffic calming measures are becoming less popular and are being requested less often and it is hoped that these signs will provide an alternative for councils to use on roads that have poor safety records. They give drivers the opportunity to take back responsibility for their own driving.

Opinion Polls

A couple of the stories used in this newsletter have used the results from surveys/opinion polls, but can all polls be trusted. Public faith in polls is falling and now the major polling firms in the UK are taking action by forming the British Polling Council, which is aimed at restoring public confidence. The British Polling Council (BPC) was launched in November 2004 and includes Mori, ICM, NOP and YouGov amongst its members. It aims to raise professional standards and help the public judge the reliability and validity of survey results. BPC president John Barbour says: "The organisations that have joined the BPC recognise the need for uniform standards of disclosure about how polls are conducted so that consumers of poll findings have an adequate basis for judging the reliability of the findings. For more information on this story see BBC News.

Nanotechnology Standardisation

The Committee for European Standardisation has set up a working group on standardisation for nanotechnology. Nanotechnology - the science that deals with the interactions between atoms and molecules for a wide range of applications and is expected to create a trillion dollar

market over the next 10 years. The aim of the working group is to review current activities and provide CEN with recommendations for standardisation. In the UK, the BSI is establishing a national committee to report to the CEN group. BSI's John Terry says, "It is not the role of standards to prohibit product development. The buyer in the UK wants to be sure that the manufacturer is making things of a universal standard. We want to facilitate this process, to give manufacturers the tools for the job. Consumer confidence is very important and I believe standardisation will provide that by helping to control this new technology. For further information please visit www.bsi-global.com.