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QMT Student's Exam Results

Congratulations to all our students who sat the IQA Diploma in Quality modules in June 2003. Well done for a 100% pass rate. This should give our students who will be sitting the exam in January 2004, the confidence to achieve the same. If you would like to register on any of the distance learning, IQA Diploma in Quality modules please call 01483 453511 or visit our website www.qmt.co.uk we are offering a 10% discount if students register and pay for all 6 modules in advance.

Online Credit Checks

It has been reported that Britain's two largest credit reference agencies, Experian and Equifax, have recently started offering online credit reports services designed to help combat ID fraud. Experian's CreditExpert service is designed to alert individuals by email or SMS text when important changes have taken place on their credit report, which they can access online to see if these changes are an indication of fraud. The service costs £49.99 per year with a free 30 day trial. Equifax also recently launched a more limited service called MyEquifax which allows individuals to view their credit details online for £8.25. Online credit monitoring is well established in the US and the two companies hope to extend similar services into Europe, where ID theft is becoming a growing problem. According to Experian, more than 32,000 cases of identity theft were identified in the UK in 2002, double the number of the

previous year. The company reckons ID theft costs the UK economy £1.3 billion per year. For more information please visit www.theregister.co.uk

Small Business Standard

The UK's first quality standard aimed at SME's has been launched by Members of the Institute of Quality Assurance Management Consultants Register. The "Small Business Standard" can be used as a step on the way to ISO9001 or to the Business Excellence model. It can be used by organisations that do not have sufficient resources for the more traditional certifications and yet would still like to demonstrate that they are taking quality seriously. It provides a framework for self-assessment, which can then be used to identify areas for improvement. For more information please visit IQA's website www.iqa.org.

Harmonised Membership Scheme for Quality Professionals

As in many professions, Quality Professionals now travel and work throughout Europe and this has led to a demand for a harmonisation of quality qualifications. There is now a scheme that uses the training and qualification systems already in existence in the EOQ's member countries to produce a European system that will give mutual recognition of qualifications and the registration and certification of quality personnel Europe-wide. The IQA currently offers three of the EOQ grades in the UK



- EOQ Quality System Auditor – a person qualified to conduct external audits
- EOQ Quality Professional – a quality engineer with responsibilities for devising and applying quality techniques
- EOQ Quality Systems Manager – a person who holds the responsibility for the creation and implementation of a quality system within an organisation

Other schemes are also available from other EOQ member organisations:

- Environmental System Managers
- Health and Safety Managers
- Environmental Auditors
- TQM Leaders
- TQM Assessors
- Health and Safety Auditors
- Process Managers
- Management System Consultants

For more information please visit IQA's website www.iqa.org

Internet Pornography and Your employer

According to a research conducted by the Dutch legal trade magazine - People Planet Profit, employees in the Netherlands cannot be sacked for downloading Internet pornography during office hours, unless there is a clear code of conduct. Companies would need to clearly indicate what can and cannot be done on company time and company equipment in order to dismiss employees. Only large companies have these kinds of code of practice, whereas smaller companies often don't. This also seems to be the general trend almost everywhere in Europe. In the UK, "email and net abuse" is now the most popular reason for employees dismissal. Companies must have a clear code of conduct over internet and email usage if they are to avoid being sued for unlawful dismissal. A draft Directive on privacy in the workplace by the European Commission may also hold back companies suing their employees for

visiting porn sites. The directive will control all aspects of employee privacy and manage requirements on monitoring of Internet and email usage at work. This is so that the employer is better served by preventing internet and email abuse, rather than detecting it. Continuous monitoring should be permitted only if required for health, safety, security or protection of property. Workers should be informed before the introduction of any system used for monitoring. For further details please visit www.theregister.co.uk

OHSAS 18002 Associate Consultancy Scheme Launched

BSI Management Systems have launched the OHSAS 18002 Associate Consultancy Scheme to add to the services available to organisations who wish to implement the health and safety specification OHSAS 18001. A number of consultancy practices are already signed up to the scheme and the number for the first year will be capped at 15. The Consultants have to meet criteria set by BSI Management Systems and have been trained by BSI to effectively implement OHSAS18001. These Associate Consultants are a resource that can be drawn on by organisations implementing the H&S standard and they can be confident in the advice and support they are being given. More information can be found on the 18002 Consultant Website: www.18002ac.com

Six Sigma

The John Loxham Lecture this year at the University of Strathclyde will be given by Greg Watson of ASQ. The title of the lecture is "Six Sigma: Fantasy, Fact or Fad". Six Sigma is a new management philosophy that has spread worldwide. If you would like to find out more about the Six-Sigma process and how it could help you then please visit www.qmt.co.uk. For more information on the lecture please visit www.iqa.org/training.



Sex Discrimination and the Data Protection Act

Firms who are trying to avoid claims for sex discrimination could instead be breaking the Data Protection Act. Employees who feel that they may have a claim under the Equal Pay Act 1970 can now ask their employer for information on the pay of a comparable colleague, either by name or job title. But – this information is classified as confidential personal data under the Data Protection Act and should not normally be disclosed to a third party. Although the employer does not have to respond, failing to do so could mean that an unnecessary employment tribunal can take place, and the tribunal may also see their withholding of information as a negative response. One way to get over this issue is to ask the employees permission to disclose their pay – but most employees would not give their permission. Alternatively, the company may be able to maintain the anonymity of the employee by referring to general grades. This is much harder to do in smaller companies and so this problem is most likely to effect small companies. If the company cannot respond to an employee's questions then it must make it clear that it is because consent was not given for the information to be released. For more information please see www.theregister.co.uk

Are CDs Safe for Archiving?

More and more records are being kept on CDs – but how secure are they? Some manufacturers claim that their CDs are good for at least 10 years, if you keep them out of sunlight. However, according to a Dutch magazine “PC Active” some degrade in months, even at room temperature without sunlight. The magazine tested data disks from 30 manufacturers that were recorded 20 months ago and some had developed serious errors or had become virtually unreadable. They believe that the different dye systems used are the root of the problem – some being more stable than others. Unfortunately, the article doesn't mention any premium brands that

performed well. For more information please visit www.theregister.co.uk

New Standard for Risk Management

A new standard looking at risk management in space systems has been launched by ISO – “ISO 17666:2003, Space systems – Risk Management”. It provides a road map to guide the risk management process at all stages in the life of a space project, regardless of its complexity, size and duration. According to Mr. Deak, the project leader of the standard it could also be useful in any industry sector or business that aims to reduce project risks – not just in Space Systems. He says “The standard can be used in the organisation as a user-friendly tool to implement risk management, without imposing undue restrictions. It is elaborated at such a level of detail that renders it to be sufficient resource to establish a frame work for risk management – inside or outside the space sector”. The new standard extends the requirements of ISO 14300-1:2001, Space systems – Programme management – part 1: Structuring of a programme. It is available from ISO national member institutes. For further details please visit www.iso.ch

New Standard for Visual Displays in Cars

There are a range of in-vehicle information systems e.g. traffic information, route guidance, and they must be easy and quick to read so that the driver is not distracted from his primary task of driving. ISO 15008:2003 Road vehicles – ergonomic aspects of transport information and control systems – Specifications and compliance procedures for in-vehicle visual presentation, offers recommendations to assists designers, manufacturers and suppliers regarding these issues. It includes details on image quality and legibility of displays under different viewing conditions, as well as overall appearance of text and symbols. For example, red characters on blue backgrounds should be avoided since the eyes have trouble focusing on these colour

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combinations. For further details please visit www.iso.ch

Water Pollution

The new water services bill due to be published next month will mean that polluters who contaminate public or private water supplies face up to 10 years in prison and fines up to 15 million euros. The law also gives county councils the power to take over privately owned water schemes that have high levels of contamination. It also means that property owners are now obliged to ensure that drains, septic tanks etc. do not cause a risk to health or the environment. Developers and construction firms will have stiff penalties imposed if sewers are blocked or water mains damaged. The bill underpins the campaign to raise water quality levels in public and private water supplies. The most recent water quality report by the Environment Protection Agency last January found that 20% of public water supplies and 30% of group water schemes showed the presence of faecal coliforms. However, 96% of public water supplies are of an “acceptable” standard. For more information please visit www.timesonline.co.uk

Spam Banned

It will be a criminal offence in the UK to send unsolicited messages. Under the new law spammers could be fined £5,000 in a magistrates court or an unlimited penalty from a jury. The measures will take effect on 11 December and will be enforced by the Information Commissioner. Under the new law companies will have to obtain permission from an individual before they can send them an email or text message. But the regulations do not cover business e-mail addresses. EU legislation banning unwanted email is due to come into force on 31 October. Unfortunately, as the Internet is so global, it may have little effect – spam from the US and Asia will be outside their reach. For further details please see BBC news.