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Quality Digest asked readers in January, "For those you who have used both, how would you compare ISO 9001:2000 to ISO 9001:1994?" Here are the results:

- ISO 9001:2000 is better than the 1994 version. 75.1%
- Neither version is superior. 13.7%
- The 1994 version was better. 10.5%

Other Responses

- "ISO 9001:2000 is more adequate for the manufacturing process."
- "The continuous improvement, emphasis on customer requirements and management commitment pieces of ISO 9001:2000 have been greatly improved."
- "The 2000 version is better because it requires processes to be interrelated. Interrelation is critical to effectiveness."
- "The process-based focus has greatly helped our processes and business."
- "The 1994 version was easier to understand."

How lean is your company's business operating system documentation?

Many companies have established their quality system after purchasing a software program with a "canned" quality manual, procedures, and forms. Software companies try to sell you the concept that more is better which increases the length and complexity of your documentation system. Management representatives often create large amounts of information fearful of missing something so they document everything to pass that registrar audit or ensure the customer we have it all.

Many efforts aren't well coordinated; departments write documents separately, while ignoring the big picture and not taking a system approach to development. The result is several documents that address the same issue (e.g. nonconforming product, identification of product) and facilitates lots of redundancy.

Other people who put your quality system together (this includes consultants):

- Don't write well and/or don't see the big picture of your business
- Don't think systematically
- Would rather write fluff than practical actions
- Think they know it all, and tell you so
- Using a business operating system (e.g., ISO 9001) as a method to do what they want done, rather than what's good for the organization and what is required by the standard.

So, why should I care about an overly complex and redundant system? The disadvantages are many including:

- Those who review and approve a document for implementation don't read the entire document because it's too long, wordy, and confusing. Anyone flowcharting?
- If documents aren't properly reviewed and improved, it will contain process inaccuracies
- Few people will follow lengthy, complex, and redundant procedures because doing so is a pain in the...
- Few people will refer back or care about any procedure or document when it's too confusing. The result increases process variation, costs, and upsets customers.

How can your company do this? Tear apart that documentation, define, and eliminate what isn't adding value to the document. You can determine what words and stuff doesn't add value by asking yourself:

1. Does anyone really read this section of this document (absolutely applies if you purchased a canned program!)
2. Does this information really affect the quality of my product, service, or process?
3. Is this redundant? Can I refer to another document or another part of the same document that already states the same requirements?
4. Is this just fluff, mumbo-jumbo that doesn't tell anyone to do anything?
5. Is this statement, requirement, process step/definition stated once or is it stated multiple times in the same document or in another one?

In my experience, one of the biggest failures with developing leaner documentation is the existence of redundancy. In trying to comply with ISO 9000:1994 many people felt they needed multiple procedures for each of the 20 elements. This was an incorrect assumption. This mindset still exists and what use to be a procedure, can now be first level documentation. Some questions you can ask yourself might be able to include:

1. Do we really need procedures for inspection and test as well as identification and traceability; or can we incorporate these requirements into the process control procedure?
2. Do we really need a customer complaint procedure and separate procedures for corrective and preventive action, or can we combine them?
3. Does your internal audit procedure refer to the corrective and preventive action procedure or does it repeat the same requirements?
4. Do you need procedures for handling, storage, preservation, packaging, and delivery, or can these be combined or placed into the process control procedure?

This is the time to improve your documented system and make it easier for you, your employees, your customers, and your registrar. I'm sure your internal audit team would also be grateful. Your employees know the problems and complexities of your system, ask them! In the spirit of continual improvement, it's important to take advantage of making your documented system user-friendly. Input the controls necessary, so it doesn't happen again.

ISO Announces Formal Transition Plan

ISO recently released a formal transition plan for organizations working toward compliance with ISO 14001:2004.

The transition plan is designed to help organizations registered to ISO 14001:1996 update their EMS to be consistent with the new version of the standard. After May 15, 2006, the International Accreditation

Forum will only recognize registrations to the 2004 version of 14001. The IAF estimates that 18 months is sufficient for the transition to ISO 14001:2004, compared to the three-year transition considered necessary for ISO 9001:1994-registered organizations transitioning to ISO 9001:2000. The 18-month transition plan is for implementation by certification bodies accredited by IAF members performing ISO 14001 audits. The main points are:

- For up to six months after the Nov. 15, 2004, publication date of ISO 14001:2004, it's up to the certification bodies and their clients to agree on whether audits are conducted according to the 1996 standard or its revision. After May 15, 2005, audits should conform to ISO 14001:2004.
- During this period, no additional audits will be added to the auditing cycle solely to assess revisions made to existing EMSs to conform to the requirements of ISO 14001:2004.
- Nonconformities to ISO 14001:2004 may be raised against organizations currently registered to the old version but won't adversely affect certification until the end of the 18-month transition period.
- Existing ISO 14001:1996 certificates will be renewed as ISO 14001:2004 certificates only after the EMS has been successfully audited as conforming to the new version. All existing certificates must be renewed to the new version before the end of the 18-month transition period.
- Eighteen months after the Nov. 15, 2004, publication date of ISO 14001:2004, no ISO 14001:1996 certificate will be considered valid by the IAF.

For more information, visit www.iso.org or www.iaf.nu.

