

The Strategic Importance of Implementing a Quality Management System (QMS)

Six Key Benefits of ISO 9001:2015 Implementation:

1. Improvement of credibility and image

Because ISO 9001 is an internationally recognised standard, it has become the basis for creating a quality management system around the world. When a company is looking for a supplier, it is often a requirement to have a QMS based on ISO 9001 in order to be considered. Attaining ISO 9001 certification can be a powerful marketing tool.

2. Improvement of customer satisfaction

One of the quality management principles that constitute the foundation of the ISO 9001 requirements is to improve customer satisfaction by planning for and striving to meet customer requirements.

3. Better process integration

By looking at the overall process interactions through the process approach of ISO 9001, improvements in efficiency and cost savings can be brought about. This is done by eliminating the waste that can occur when processes are maintained without a view of the inefficiencies that can arise during process handoff. The better process flow can also be used to drive efficiencies towards fewer errors, which can improve cost savings.

4. Improve evidence for decision-making

A second quality management principle of ISO 9001 is the need to use evidence-based decision-making. By driving your decisions based on the evidence, rather than on “gut feelings,” you can be more focused on applying resources to the areas that will improve efficiencies and increase cost savings with less trial and error to find the right decision. In addition, by monitoring the process you are improving, you will be able to see how much improvement has been brought about based on the data.

5. Create a continual improvement culture

Continual improvement is a third quality management principle of ISO 9001. Adopting this culture to improve your processes and organisational output will result in efficiencies and cost savings, including the use of systematic processes when problems occur in order to reduce the impact of the problem and increase the speed of recovery. By making this a continual process, improving year after year, the company can see continuing benefits.

6. Engagement of employees

Employees who are involved in the improvement of the processes they work with are happier and more engaged employees. The people who work with a process are better skilled to identify the areas that need improvement, and to help to test and advance these improvements during implementation. Engaged employees are more productive and will assist the company in increasing its improvement rate and cost savings, especially when they understand how the quality of the process depends on them.

Six Misconceptions about ISO 9001:

1. ISO 9001 says we have to do it this way

The ISO 9001 requirements do not define the “how to” of a process; they only identify important items that the process needs to address. Often a process owner cannot understand why something needs to be included in the process, and is merely informed that the standard requires that it be done in a certain way. In this case, the suggestion of how to incorporate the requirement is interpreted as being prescriptive. We need to be careful about how we relay the requirements to those who need to implement them.

2. ISO 9001 belongs to the quality department alone

Many people think that the ISO 9001 standard is the sole responsibility of the quality department of the organisation. This is not true, since the requirements cover every aspect of the business – from planning through delivery and post-delivery of all products and services.

3. ISO 9001 does not apply to my department

It is not true that “ISO 9001 is only for big businesses” or “ISO 9001 is not for service providers”. ISO 9001 is intended to be a set of requirements that can be used by any company, of any size, in any industry. The requirements are a set of best practices needed to control all the processes of a business system – no matter what the company does.

4. Everything needs to be documented

Earlier versions of ISO 9001 stated: “Write what you do, then do what you write.” While documentation of all aspects of the standard was needed then, this changed in the 2000 version of the standard (and every update since). It is now left to the company’s discretion to determine what needs to be documented to ensure compliance of the product or service. Some other versions of this myth are “Procedures need to be in-depth.”, “You need to keep records of everything.”, “You need to make forms for everything.” and “You need to keep stats on everything.” – all of which are false assumptions.

5. ISO 9001 is expensive to implement and maintain

Although there are costs associated with the initial implementation of ISO 9001 and some processes to monitor the system, the benefits far outweigh these costs if the system is used. The main drive of the ISO 9001 quality management system is to achieve greater customer satisfaction, eliminate the root causes of problems, and improve processes. The overall outcome of these activities should be to reduce costs through improvements and increase revenue through satisfied customers. The return on investment should be well above the costs.

6. Everything needs to be perfect at the start

If this were true, then where would one be able to improve (as is required by the ISO 9001 standard)? The processes need to be stable and adequately monitored, so that one can detect problems and apply appropriate corrective action to the causes of these problems. This is not the same thing as needing to be perfect. Perhaps this is the root cause of another misconception, namely that it takes years to implement ISO 9001. In fact, you can take the processes you already have in place, possibly with some minor changes, to form the basis of your quality management system. You will continue to improve your system as you use it.