

Moving from ISO9000:1994 to ISO9001:2000

Over the past years most quality professionals have been involved in the various quality systems in the 9000 family. 2003 sees the expiration of ISO 9001-2:1994 and its replacement with ISO 9001:2000. The expiration of the familiar 20 section requirements causes all companies with ISO 9001-2 registrations to modify or redesign their quality management systems to accommodate the new requirements. The fundamental change in ISO 9001 will find their way through the associated standards (QS 9000, TS16949:1994, AS9000, etc.) at various times over the next few years.

The changes have large impact on some organizations and minimal impact on others. The change in impact is usually related to the amount of 'systemization' in the quality system. Some organizations originally created a working system and applied the system to the ISO requirements. Other organizations directly addressed the previously prescriptive requirements on an individual basis with little consideration of the interaction of distinct requirements.

ISO 9001:2000 is much less prescriptive than the 1994 version. It requires greater imagination and systematic thought to meet or understand the requirements. The changes can wreak havoc on existing methods and practices that lacked systematic thought.

One example is both common and troublesome. Many organizations identified documents, assigned responsibilities and referenced other information based on the numbering of the 1994 requirements. It made a certain amount of intuitive sense but was actually an indicator of 'method' thinking. The numbering of the 2000 standards is completely different. In a relatively short period of time only the old salts will have the first clue as to what '4.5' is about. Purchasing will probably continue to be called purchasing within your organization and training will still be training.

Also, few quality management systems were ever designed. The ISO 9000 requirements are a lot of things to a lot of people but they never have represented a design of a quality management system.

Deep in academic thought about the theory of systems is a basic concept, "Systems cannot be trouble-shot, they must be redesigned." This is true because what makes something a system is the interaction between the various components and subsystems. Trouble-shooting takes the pieces apart and analyzes the pieces. Once disassembled the pieces no longer work as a system. Yikes! Just saying that out loud will make you swoon.

All together it's a lot like gravity. You may not be able to do the math and physics of gravitational attraction but you can still fall down. If you ignore or violate the basic rules of systems they will not work well.

The proper place to start is with the desires of the organization. What does the organization want? Many organizations have neglected this fundamental step or thought they only wanted to get ISO registration. But if you ask a few questions, "Do you want to do this the hard way?" – "Are we in favor of repeated mistakes?" – "Do we care how much this costs initially or to maintain?" we can see the organization does have other goals relative to the quality management system.

A quality management system is first a goal-seeking system. If your organization designs an efficient goal-seeking system, insists that the organization uses it, then applies the system to meeting the ISO requirements that system will have no difficulty adapting to the future ISO 9001:2006 changes.

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