

WHAT'S THE POINT OF YOUR QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

Adam Lloyd, PCQI, Integrated Management Systems Advisor
at Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, explores the importance of continuously
improving your quality management system



“Create a purposeful and robust QMS with a focus, and ensure the foundations of the QMS are set for customer satisfaction”

In *Quality World* December 2018, Ali Al-Zubaidi, CQP FCQI, Managing Director at Integrated Management Systems Associates (IMSA), made a comment on quality management systems (QMS) and the impact it has had on me is significant.

Al-Zubaidi said: “Quality management systems should be implemented in organisations to help achieve stakeholder satisfaction and not simply meet the generic and minimum requirements of international standards.” To me, this is an obvious statement and yet it is so commonly missed by others.

A QMS, regardless of ISO 9001 certification, should be implemented and continuously improved to ensure the organisation meets customer requirements and enhances their satisfaction.

As auditors, it is very possible that we will at some point in our career work with an organisation that does the bare minimum when it comes to their QMS. By this I mean a QMS that looks good, satisfies literal requirements, but does not actually provide much benefit to stakeholder satisfaction and therefore does not serve the purpose of the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

For example, ISO 9001:2015 requires a management review of an organisation’s QMS to ensure the system is performing adequately, effectively and aligns with the strategic direction of the organisation. A management review involves top management and takes place regularly throughout the year. However, the reviews often praise the efforts of each team and do not focus on the true performance in terms of the management system and audits.

Sometimes, these management reviews also have low attendance and it wouldn’t be rare for an organisation to simply hold the management review between the chief executive officer and the quality manager.

Of course, not many organisations aspire to ISO 9001 certification to improve their processes and implement resilience. They aspire to certification because of current customer requirements or to improve their professional image for future business. In some cases, an organisation’s QMS team may be told they need to obtain certification, although they lack the experience and training. As such, they may not be aware of the potential benefits that a dedicated and purposeful QMS can provide.

As QMS auditors, it is our decision whether we assist an organisation in creating and improving a true QMS that is fit-for-purpose and designed to drive improvements within the organisation, or merely retain certification and satisfy the requirements of the standard.

Sir Richard Branson often says to look after your employees so they will look after your customers. The same could be said for a QMS. Create a purposeful and robust QMS with a focus, and ensure the foundations of the QMS are set for customer satisfaction. Implement a team to manage it and the QMS will provide the business resilience and direction to ensure customer and stakeholder satisfaction.

At all times remember, quality management systems should be implemented in organisations to help achieve stakeholder satisfaction and not simply meet the generic and minimum requirements of international standards.

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