

Assignment to achieve ISO 27001, ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 system certification

Our client was one of the UK's largest document and microfilm scanning bureaux, delivering its services to customers in both the private and public sectors, with records management centres in a range of locations.

Having been established in 1974, our client had maintained its ISO 9001 QMS certification for over 15 years and so was familiar with the requirements of working to a management system.

The business now aimed to realise further competitive advantage by commissioning Touchstone Renard to develop an integrated management system, covering three new standards, to be integrated with their existing ISO 9001 system:

- Information Security Standard ISO 27001
- Information Management Standard BS 10008
- Environmental Management Standard ISO 14001

Our task

With the pressures of the business in mind, our client preferred us to lead and carry out most of the development work for the new system, allowing managers and their teams to continue devoting their energies to the all important day to day activities. Our aim, as always, was to minimise disruption to our client's routine work and to liaise mainly with the selected managers and colleagues forming the client project team, as necessary, for reporting and review.

From commencement to the 'Go Live' date, the project was programmed to take nine months, working on all the standards in parallel and making an assessment regarding the potential integration of ISO 9001. We decided to take a step by step approach.

How we went about it

Before fully designing the detailed programme, we selected our consulting project team. We appointed friendly, enthusiastic professionals with significant experience in management standards and systems within a range of sectors, including IT and communications.

The project manager was Touchstone Renard's Managing Director, Phil Austin, who always takes a personal interest and involvement in every assignment to ensure that the work is undertaken and completed entirely to the client's satisfaction.

The project team was also supported by an Account Manager who was available at all times as the immediate point of contact for any commercial and client satisfaction concerns.

Our programme

The work programme was designed to progress along a series of six well defined steps:

Step 1 – carrying out the Initial 'gap analysis'

As we always do before a client introduces any new standard, we started by carrying out an audit and gap analysis in discussion with the client team to provide an assessment of where they were, where they wished and needed to be and confirm the tasks that need to be accomplished to close the gaps.

Step 2 – preparing and agreeing an action plan

Armed with the results of the gap analysis, we advised our client whether it was, after all, appropriate to the business to create an integrated management system in preference to two or more separate systems. The information available indicated that our client would certainly benefit from the proposed integrated system which enabled us to produce an action plan tailored to include the four standards.

Step 3 – developing the integrated management system

The consultant team members were now in a position to focus their efforts on producing the necessary documents for standards being achieved and the integrated system which contained detailed information on all the relevant policies, processes and procedures.

There was also the opportunity to incorporate features of the existing management system but with new improvements.

Step 4 – reviewing and finalising the management system

We compared the new system under development with the outcome of the 'gap analysis' and the requirements of the standards to ensure that all aspects were being covered. We were pleased that a new system had been created that was practical, met the needs of our client and satisfied all four standards.

Step 5 – testing and launching the management system

The next stage involved training our client's people under the new system and seeing how it worked in practice. We carried out a programme of awareness workshops for all staff, with the aim of providing a common understanding of the new standards, their relevance and how they could benefit the business. Taking on board the views and comments of all employees, we were able to identify ways of making further improvements before we let the system 'go live'. For the next six weeks, everyone in the business began working to the system with our consultants monitoring progress, holding periodic review meetings and suggesting further improvements.

Step 6 – Certification assessment

We began contacting prospective assessment bodies to carry out the independent audit and certification process while continuing to review the practicalities of the system with our client team. Our consultants, who were also trained auditors, carried out a pre-assessment audit to check how well the system was working and whether it would pass the forthcoming external, independent audit. There is no such thing as reaching the end of the road with a management system and even at this stage, together with our client, we were looking for improvements.

Touchstone Renard always recommends that a client achieves any recognised management standard certification through the services of an independent, UKAS accredited assessment and certification body.

What was achieved and our thoughts on the assignment

As the result of an outstanding team effort, driven by the commitment and dedication of our consultants and client, a new integrated management system was installed, tailored to the needs of the business and offering a wide range of benefits. Our client's Managing Director made the following statement:

'.....thanks to you and your team for the excellent work achieved this year on our standards'

Acknowledged client benefits included:

- Offering a competitive edge, especially in troubled economic times, enabling the business to bid for more contracts, particularly in the public sector, and win more work!
- Increasing confidence in the organisation's integrity, competence and professionalism, demonstrating a high level of awareness, responsibility, customer care and commitment
- Protecting the organisation's business interests, people and reputation by reducing the risk of damaging consequences caused by security lapses
- Enabling electronic information to be used as evidence for legal purposes, including court cases. Providing the ability to produce a life time history of an item that has been stored in electronic form. Responding to questions of document identity verification; the use of electronic signatures and copyright
- Helping with finance as lenders are often willing lenders are often more willing to deal with businesses that can show a high level of environmental and social responsibility.
- Generally improving the ways in which the business works, enabling it to reduce costs, improve performance, ensure compliance with legislation and regulations and boost morale.