

An assignment to project manage and support achievement of ISO 9001 certification for a large division of a major transport client



Trains Delivery Group (TDG) was a division of a major metro industry client, comprising around 900 professional engineer employees.

With a Quality Manual of draft policies in circulation and a vast quantity of undocumented procedures in place, the TDG Management Team aimed to establish a Quality Management System to ISO 9001 requirements, encompassing the entirety of TDG's activities.

This task could not be underestimated, having regard to the number of employee teams and locations and the diverse range of work undertaken.

Our task

Touchstone Renard was pleased to be selected to project manage and support TDG through to ISO 9001 certification and wasted no time in setting about the task, given the ambitious targets set by TDG managers. From commencement to external assessment, the project was programmed to take nine months. We therefore allowed six months between the start of the assignment and the 'Go Live' date for the new system, leaving three months for the revised ways of working to become embedded prior to certification.

How we went about it

Selecting our team

Before fully designing the detailed programme, we selected our Touchstone Renard project team from amongst our consultants. We appointed friendly, enthusiastic professionals who were skilled in engineering processes, ISO 9001 and other management standards, with extensive experience of working within the transport sector.

We considered it essential to include team members who had formally trained as ISO 9001 auditors as their knowledge and ability would be particularly important during the internal project audit stage, later in the assignment.

Our programme

Our team would normally have 'started from scratch' and would not have been deterred to encounter a certain lack of interest amongst staff. However, with TDG having already embarked on the road to quality management by putting an outline structure in place, together with their set of draft policies, staff had clearly taken a positive approach, embraced a degree of 'ownership' and given thought to procedures and the concept of process mapping.

The programme of work was designed to take TDG through the process from start to certification stage in such a way as to harness and develop further the enthusiasm and understanding of all involved in the project, while working time and cost effectively, with a view to avoiding disruption to TDG's routine business activities.

Project launch and awareness sessions



We kicked off with a series of Project Launch Lunches for TDG managers and team coordinators. These sessions gave senior staff the opportunity to meet the Touchstone Renard team, find out about the proposed programme, become more familiar with the concept of ISO 9001, raise any issues and contribute their ideas.

The team coordinators then used the Touchstone Renard information packs that we had provided to carry out a series of cascade briefings with all the engineers. We were very keen to receive the comments and ideas of staff at all levels and these were fed back to us at follow-up sessions with team co-ordinators.

We then carried out a programme of ISO 9001 Awareness Workshops for all staff, with the aim of providing a common understanding of the ISO 9000 'family' of standards and in particular, ISO 9001 and – putting it in context - how it related to and could benefit the work carried out by TDG.

To make best use of time, these briefings took place to coincide with regular team meeting sessions, combining some teams together for greater efficiency and enhanced interaction. We were soon picking up on the encouraging fact that the engineers were keen to be engaged in the process, although we could have offered further support had managers been concerned about possible negativity or uncertainty.

Review and revision of policies

The next step was to carry out a thorough review of the draft Quality Manual, containing TDG's existing policy statements.

We had to consider the nature and content of stated policies compared to those that would have been ideal, having regard to TDG's particular aims, objectives, powers and duties as a division of London Underground. This process involved detailed discussions with managers and team coordinators, combined with in-depth desk reviews of relevant materials.

We took care to ensure that we received the views and comments of all management personnel and the Touchstone Renard team worked around the various schedules of managers to offer maximum flexibility and convenience to TDG staff.

With all the information and comments received and policies initially revised, we set up an Away-day for managers to approve the changes. To save time on the day, the Touchstone Renard team had already introduced managers to the amendments being proposed and gathered their further comments. The day went well as managers focused on the task in hand and, in discussion as a group, were able to highlight any outstanding issues.

With appropriate refinements in place, the final Quality Manual could be issued ahead of target to allow more time for procedures to be developed or revised, based on the agreed policies, to enable staff to work to the new system well before certification.

Investigating and auditing procedures



For the next stage of the assignment, we divided the Touchstone Renard team into small groups to enable each set of consultants to concentrate fully on particular TDG procedures.

Each group was responsible for carrying out a series of unobtrusive audit investigations before designing the structure of relevant processes taking place.

Touchstone Renard's trained ISO 9001 auditors then carried out a gap analysis to discover whether the policies stated and procedures taking place differed significantly from the requirements of ISO 9001. Where they did differ, they were

referred to as 'nonconformities' and needed to be addressed and modified.

In introducing any management system, it is always important to ensure as far as possible that policies and procedures, while complying with the relevant management standard, also work well for the business and its people.

We therefore took care to ensure that modifications fitted well with TDG but wouldn't prejudice their aim to achieve formal ISO 9001 certification.

Going live

Having received the formal approval of TDG managers to the new system, it was ready to be installed, with information being made available to the engineers both electronically and in hard copy and a series of System Workshops being held to communicate the changes to everyone.

The new system went live on the agreed date, leaving over three months for it to become familiar and for teething problems to be resolved through a monitoring process.

Before the external assessment took place, we carried out a final pre-assessment audit, in a similar way to an external assessor, focusing especially on actual practice compared with the requirements of the manuals and ISO 9001.

Independent assessment and certification

Touchstone Renard always recommends that a client achieves ISO 9001 or any other recognised management standard certification through the services of an independent, UKAS accredited assessment and certification body.

TDG's selected external assessor finally carried out the on-site visit on the appointed date, following which, ISO 9001 certification was recommended.

What we achieved and our thoughts on the assignment

As the result of an inspiring team effort, driven by the commitment and dedication of our consultants and TDG staff, our client had cause for celebration when ISO 9001 certification was achieved.

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We were made aware that our client appreciated our help in leading and supporting such a large number of staff, grouped in their various teams and engineering disciplines, through the processes required to achieve certification. TDG managers subsequently introduced a routine monitoring and reporting system which we had recommended to ensure continuous progress and improvement, in accordance with the key principles of ISO 9001.

Phil Austin, Managing Director of Touchstone Renard, who personally oversaw this assignment as Project Director, was delighted to congratulate the managers and engineering staff at TDG on their great success.