

## **An assignment to help an engineering company achieve ISO 9001 certification**

### **Introduction and background**



Touchstone Renard was delighted when a local engineering company requested advice and general support in achieving certification to the internationally recognised quality management standard, ISO 9001.

As the company clearly had the benefit of an enthusiastic internal team and a range of documented policies and procedures already in place, we agreed that the aim of achieving certification within six months was entirely realistic.

### **Our task**

In addition to providing general consultancy support and advice, our client particularly requested our help with the delivery of staff awareness training and coaching; the revision and refinement of the quality manual and current procedures; and the selection of an independent certification body to carry out the external assessment at the end of the process.

We explained in detail the other steps that would be required to take our client team through the process to ensure that staff embraced and took ownership of the new quality system and that the new policies and procedures worked well in practice for the organisation, as well as complying with the standard.

### **How we went about it**

We selected one of our most experienced standards consultants to carry out much of the work on a day to day basis, although Phil Austin, Managing Director of Touchstone Renard, took personal responsibility for overseeing the assignment. Phil was available by telephone or email and his role included visiting the client company at key stages to ensure smooth delivery of the project and complete satisfaction by client managers.

We drew up a project programme to ensure that the requisite tasks were achieved by designated target dates, leading to certification within six months. It was particularly helpful that our consultancy work was supported by staff in our client's Quality Improvement Team, who ably assisted with facilitation and internal audits.

The project was carried out in two distinct parts. The aim of the first part was to undertake a full and detailed gap analysis against the requirements of the standard, followed by the preparation of a detailed action plan to plug any gaps. The second part was to project manage the implementation of all the necessary tasks.

The programme was designed to include the particular elements of support that our client required in terms of training (including training staff to act as internal auditors); redesigning the relevant documentation; carrying out periodic assessments once the new system was in place; and facilitating the final certification process.

Following the gap analysis exercise and the task of re-drafting policies and procedures, we were all pleased when the new system went live and the 'dry run' could begin. The system was constantly monitored and reviewed over a period of several weeks and, working closely with the Quality Improvement Team, internal audits helped to pinpoint areas for further modification.

We always advise our clients to arrange for certification to ISO 9001 and other ISO management standards through an independent, UKAS accredited, external assessment body, enabling them to display the famous crown and tick logo to announce their success.

We facilitated the selection process for the external assessor but, as always, left the final choice to our client's managers. We were requested to attend the external assessment although, to ensure complete independence, we took no formal part in the process. Having previously carried out a final internal assessment, we were confident that our client company would achieve certification.

### **What we achieved**

We were, of course, delighted to be able to congratulate our client when the external assessor recommended certification. This dynamic engineering company, with its skilled, friendly and enthusiastic team, has now grown considerably, since first achieving ISO 9001. We are pleased to have been retained to support this much valued client in maintaining certification to the present date.