



Quest



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Regular news items and latest updates on ISO certification



THE ENVIRONMENT IS YOUR BUSINESS

There are few more important issues currently facing those running businesses than environmental management. It's not a question of fashion, fad or noble cause; it's a hard fact of business life.

Scarcely a week goes by without a key environmental issue occupying our newspapers and television screens. The controversy surrounding genetically-modified foods is just one example. Never before have businesses been under such pressure to act in an environmentally responsible manner.

As this issue has become ever more relevant, so the regulatory machine to ensure we respond positively has grown. Enlightened business owners are taking the view that implementing sensible environmental management systems not only save valuable and expensive resources, but can actually reduce business costs by enabling their businesses to be run more efficiently.

The ISO 9000 quality standard has proved hugely beneficial to those businesses that have embraced it. It has provided a structured approach to a whole range of management disciplines, with the result that many businesses are now asked if they have ISO 9000 when

tendering for new business.

Environmental management is no different. The International Standards Organisation (ISO), based in Geneva, has established an international environment standard, ISO 14001, whose benefits include:

- To help businesses to implement their commitment to environmental excellence
- To complement existing safety and performance standards

As with ISO 9000, it is unlikely that most small or medium sized enterprises (SME) will have the necessary resources or expertise available to implement the standard. So it makes sense to consider the services of a specialist, third party, company that can provide the essential guidance that will lead to the successful acquisition of ISO 14001.

It will come as no surprise to our thousands of satisfied ISO 9000 customers that QAS has recently extended its specialist services to include professional advice for businesses leading to ISO 14001.



THE NEW WEB SITE – YOU LIKE IT!

IMSM's new web site – www.imsm.co.uk, launched to much critical acclaim in February, is already making a valuable contribution as a means for businesses throughout the world to obtain relevant information about the benefits of ISO 9000.

Constantly under review, the web site has recently received the addition of three entirely new pages:

ISO 9000 Training Courses includes details of the three-day and one-day courses this year, in both the UK and the USA. Both courses are designed to ensure that businesses' ISO 9000 certification remains fully updated and valid.

Job Vacancies at IMSM and QAS will give details of new opportunities for both business managers and lead assessors in all the countries where the company now operates.

The IMSM Team will include personal profiles on

three business managers and three lead assessors, giving details of their background, relevant experience and opinions of how ISO 9000 certification meets the needs of today's businesses.

Under Contact Us, which guides potential clients to the business manager nearest their own location, the number of contact names has been substantially increased. There are now 16 in the USA, covering the major cities across the country. There are two in South Africa, two in France, and one each in Australia, Canada and Germany.

Managing Director Michael Bright commented: " All the feedback indicates that our new web site is working well, acting as a highly effective marketing tool for the company. Many new clients have commented favourably on how helpful they are finding it as a means of deriving valuable information about ISO 9000."



ISO 9001:2000 TRAINING COURSES

Businesses, which already have, or are considering, ISO 9001:2000 certification – with or without guidance from QAS – can send their staff on specific courses designed to ensure that their certification remains fully updated and valid.

The first of these, one-day Internal Auditor Training courses, will be held this year at various accessible locations throughout the UK and the USA.

The three-day Lead Auditorial courses, whose aims are to equip delegates with the knowledge and skills required to perform audits of management systems against ISO 9001:2000, are also being held in the UK, at hotels at Gatwick, Bristol and Manchester, and in Chicago and Detroit in the USA.

Both the one-day and three-day courses will include comprehensive information on the changes which have followed ISO 9001:2000, the most comprehensive review of quality standards since they were first published in 1987. There are a total of 28 mandatory new requirements under the revised standard.

Certificates will be issued to all delegates who attend and successfully complete these courses.

For more details on any of these courses, please contact:

Gary Tate, Training Manager,
on: (0044) 01793 522021 (Fax)
or garyt@iso9001.co.uk

NEW NATIONAL CARE STANDARDS EMPHASISE NEED FOR QUALITY

The new National Care Standards Commission (NCSC), to be established from 1st April next year, will assume responsibility for the regulation of social care and private and voluntary health care in England.

One of the requirements of the new standards will be that every care home must have in place a recognised quality system. Undoubtedly, the reputation of ISO 9000 as the pre-eminent international quality standard means that its acquisition will become even more important for care home owners.

Gordon Inglis operates three care homes, two in Northampton and one in Flintshire. The two in Northampton, Berrywood Lodge and Fair Haven Residential Care Home provide specialist care for younger and older residents respectively with mental health and learning disability issues in their lives. Bryn Edwin Hall, near Flint, provides a residential care service for older people.

Totally committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards, the management team have invested substantial time and resources in moving the three homes forward against a yardstick of excellence. The process commenced with the utilisation of occupational standards (often through the medium of National Vocational Qualification) for all 50 staff progressing towards the National Standard Investors in People whereupon the homes then embarked on acquiring ISO 9000.

Gordon Inglis approached QAS for assistance after a recommendation from another organisation in Northampton, which had also

benefited from their help. QAS always endeavours to match the knowledge and experience of each assessor with a particular client. David Marsden, the lead quality assessor appointed to guide this project, not only lives locally, but also had previous experience working for Remploy, the Government agency that provides employment for the disabled in a normal work environment.

Gordon Inglis commented: "ISO 9000 has helped us in two key ways: internally, it has made us much more effective in delivering a high quality service to our residents. Our proven evaluation methods have demonstrated a dramatic improvement in levels of customer satisfaction. Externally, it confirms to outside agencies, such as local authorities and health authorities, who make the placement decisions of residents, that we have in place recognised quality standards.

"ISO 9000 is the most excellent change management tool. It will undoubtedly prove vital when NCSC begins next April."

NCSC web site: www.doh.gov.uk/ncsc



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The new German team (L-R)
Bernd Kuhne, Ernst Hepper, Axel Wiese, Joachim Ley, Fried Schroeder

IMSMs expansion into Germany, covered in the last issue of Quest International, is progressing apace, with a number of important new appointments.

Frankfurt area manager Axel Wiese has been building the business there with Fried Schroeder, who will undertake assessments leading to ISO 9000:2000 certification. Hitherto, these have been handled by UK-based assessor Graham Hendrick, who worked with Fried on two recent assignments. These involved a building leasing and motor repair company.

Elsewhere in Germany, three new business managers have been working for IMSM for five months. Ernst Heppner is covering the Wurzburg area; Bernd Kuhne will be concentrating on Frankfurt, while Joachim Ley will be assisting businesses in and around Mannheim.

Following a recent visit by Rick Hursthouse and Kirstie Chase, who head up IMSM's Germany operation from their offices in Chelmsford, interviews were held to recruit Business Managers and Lead Assessors to cover the Dusseldorf, Essen, Koln and Dortmund areas. The successful candidates have already begun their training. Kirstie and her assistant Josie Thiel recently successfully completed the Lead Assessors' course.

Meanwhile, plans are well advanced to train two more Lead Assessors to operate exclusively in Germany, with great possibilities of expanding into other regions, including the strategically important Munich and Hamburg areas.

Said Kirstie: "It has taken us longer to establish a presence in Germany than we originally thought, but with these recent top class appointments, we are now making excellent progress. The potential is enormous and we look forward to helping many more German companies achieve ISO 9000:2000 certification."

IMSM EXPANDS IN FRANCE



IMSM continues to make excellent progress in France. In the last three months, three new business managers have been appointed to cover the South and South West, in Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Pau. And plans are well advanced for further appointments to cover northern and eastern France.

The company now has a total of six French-speaking qualified lead assessors based in key cities such as Bordeaux, Toulouse and

Strasbourg. Until recently, projects were handled by UK-based assessors, who travelled to France to undertake the necessary procedures, which lead to ISO 9000 certification. Understandably, French companies said they preferred these vitally important processes to be carried out by resident experts.

IMSM engages only fluent French speakers at its telesales headquarters in Swindon, UK. Working from exclusive and selective databases of businesses in France, the telesales staff make appointments for its rapidly expanding team of French business managers.

The Swindon – based operation is headed by Ingrid Walcker. Ingrid, 27, who leads a team of fluent French speakers, studied English at Bordeaux University before travelling to England where she taught English at two schools in Swindon for two years, before joining IMSM.

Following her recent return to France, Ingrid's predecessor Aline Bouzidi, now IMSM's Commercial Manager in France, is

concentrating on developing relations with larger French companies, who may have numerous outlets throughout the country, with each one needing ISO 9000 certification.

As an example, the company has recently been in discussions with a major French motor part distributor, which does business with scrap metal merchants. Contrary to what one might imagine, these merchants frequently have access to good quality motor parts which, suitably examined and tested, constitute excellent second hand value.

These merchants are ideal candidates for ISO 9000, and the motor part distributor is talking with IMSM about posting their details on its web site.

Managing Director Michael Bright said: " We are making very good progress in France, where awareness of the benefits of ISO 9000 is growing all the time. Our customers continually refer us to other businesses throughout France who want to take advantage of ISO 9000 certification."

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IN USA? IT'S A MYTH

IMSMs business managers in the mid west and eastern states of the USA say that the so-called downturn in the US economy is just that – a myth.

Top business manager Scott Mersch, who covers Illinois for IMSM, says that everyone is in danger of talking themselves into a recession. " I ask every company I visit: are you in recession? Not one has said they are. Perhaps the best indication is that you can wait up to an hour to get a seat in a restaurant around 6pm. If people are short of cash, they stop going out to eat."

Examples of companies in the mid west, who have benefited from the QAS treatment, abound. One is Koford Engineering, based in Lisle, a suburb of Chicago. Koford is the leading producer of high performance slot car (Scaletric in the UK) equipment. Last year, Koford products were used to win 11 out of 12 wing car events at the US Nat's. The company also manufactures and supplies brushless DC motors and electronic products used in the aerospace and medical sectors.

It's no coincidence that, helped by QAS, they received ISO 9000 certification in February 2000. And managing director Stuart Koford is in no doubt about the benefits of their ISO 9000 certification, which is featured prominently on their web site: www.koford.com

" We find that many of our customers, particularly in the medical and IT fields, now demand ISO 9000 as a prerequisite when tendering for business. We chose QAS because of their expertise helping small businesses. We've been very pleased with their service, which has unquestionably improved our efficiency."

Graham Hendrick, QAS' lead assessor, who undertook the assignment, said: "By keeping things straightforward, Koford has implemented a quality system that improves efficiency, therefore reducing costs with fewer mistakes and wasted energy. It's no wonder their sales are up by 40%."

Another satisfied QAS customer is CSM Fastener Products, in Bensenville, near Chicago O'Hare airport, manufacturers of specialist fasteners for use in the automotive, electronic and construction industries.

They elected to apply for ISO 9000 following the introduction of the Fastener Quality Act, which made those companies with an approved quality standard exemption for many of its requirements.

Since successfully completing the processes, CSM has enjoyed a 30% reduction in goods returned, 12% overall growth and a 5% growth in their payroll but which, without ISO 9000, would have been substantially more.

Quality Manager Dave Weber commented: " It has provided us with a systematic method of addressing problems. Everyone we've dealt with, especially assessor Graham Hendrick, has been first class. We've recommended QAS to other businesses."

CSM website: www.csmfastener.com

Koford Engineering website: www.koford.com



IMSM's man in Illinois -
Scott Mersch

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Stuart Koford. Managing Director, Koford Engineering

SOUTH AFRICA – A GLITTERING FUTURE?

IMSM has been helping businesses in South Africa for over five years. During that time, over 350 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have been successfully guided towards ISO 9000 certification. With business managers in the key commercial centres of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, and plans well advanced for a presence in Pretoria, the future certainly looks bright.

Not quite as bright, however, as Johannesburg – based diamond company Wesselton, which has recently acquired ISO 9000 with help from QAS. Wesselton, in fact, is one of the first diamond companies in the world to obtain ISO to prove they are using non-conflict diamonds.

A family business established for over 50 years, Wesselton purchases, cuts and polishes rough diamonds. It then sells them to manufacturing jewellers, retailers, chain stores and wholesalers, both in South Africa and overseas.

Managing Director Mervin Lifshitz decided to acquire ISO 9000 to raise the standard of all stages of the business and to provide a framework for solid operating procedures that are internationally accepted.

He said: " I have been extremely happy with QAS' service and operational experience. It is good to work with a company that has been there, done that! "

They say that diamonds are a girl's best friend. They are certainly commodities that generate some fascinating statistics:

- Approximately 250 tons of ore are needed to produce a one carat diamond
- One carat is equal to just 0.2 grams
- Only 50% of all diamonds mined are considered suitable for gem stones
- An uncut diamond resembles nothing more than a piece of broken glass or stone – you would probably not even give one a second glance!
- During the polishing process, each diamond will lose more than 50% of its original weight.

QAS assessor Bob Gamble has been visiting South Africa regularly for the last five years and has been the guiding force behind the 350 business there that have achieved ISO 9000 certification. He is already booked to travel there on no fewer than seven occasions this year.

He commented: " I believe the future of South Africa will be as glittering as Wesselton's diamonds. One recent development is the availability of World Bank grants to companies wishing to achieve ISO 9000 certification."

Website: www.wesselton.co.za



ENGINEERING TOP QUALITY STANDARDS

Kaymac Diving and Marine Services, established in 1976, is a major provider of diving services to the marine and civil engineering industries, with offices in Swansea, Bristol and Milford Haven.

Kaymac Marine and Civil Engineering is a highly respected diving and civil engineering contractor, which include among their clients an impressive range of blue chip companies and public sector organisations.

Their experience in construction techniques, both above and below water, has made them the preferred choice for a range of projects, including laying pipelines or cables underwater, carrying out strengthening and scour protection to road or railway bridges, or installing liners to culverts.

Among the high profile projects for which they have provided their expertise have been the Cardiff Bay Barrage and the Second Severn Crossing, where Kaymac assisted in placing concrete caissons underwater for Laing/GTM, the main contractor.

Kaymac had been approached for many years by so-called consultants offering BS 5750, the predecessor to ISO 9000. But they remained unimpressed with their qualifications. As Director Gareth Crees remarked: " They all wanted us to fit into their quality standards."

QAS, however, was different. " I was impressed with their pragmatic, no-nonsense, approach. Fundamental to their philosophy is to fit to the ISO 9000 standard around our specific needs, not the other way around, as so many of the earlier companies had wanted."

The benefits have been all too evident. They have resulted in measurable improvements in a whole range of business activities, from site procedures to the issue of invoices. At the last annual quality audit, it transpired that the procedures put in place by QAS assessor David Marsden enabled disputes from two major clients to be settled quickly to Kaymac's satisfaction.

MORE BUSINESSES SIGN UP FOR ISO 9000 IN AUSTRALIA



Some of the IMSM team in Australia: John Poole with new members of the Melbourne team: Lynn Gill (left) & Joanne Guss

It's less than a year since managing director Michael Bright appointed John Poole to head up IMSM's operation in Australia. But in that short period, he has

been busy making its expertise available to a wide range, and growing number, of companies.

As an indication of the range of business sectors covered, IMSM has successfully guided firms in such areas as water filtration, plastic manufacture, fasteners, precision measuring instruments, outdoor signage, and systems integration.

This impressive progress is now being developed further, with the recent appointment of three new business managers who will cover the

Melbourne area which, as the country's second largest city with a population in excess of 3.5 million, offers huge potential.

Husband and wife team Richard and Lynn Gill have been based in Melbourne for many years. where, together, they have extensive business experience. Richard, the holder of a Master of Applied Science degree, has spent many years working in export manufacturing and corporate training, has worked for and with companies which introduced ISO 9000 certification. Lynn, meanwhile, has been successfully developing her own health and nutrition company. The Melbourne team is completed by Joanne Guss, who has wide manufacturing experience, recently put to good use in establishing her own soft furnishing business.

Said Richard Gill : " All three of us understand the importance and relevance of ISO 9000 in improving efficiency and profitability. The potential in Melbourne and throughout Victoria is very strong."