

ISO 9004:2009 – Towards sustained success

With the new version of ISO 9004 due to be published before the end of the year, David Hoyle explains the changes that have been made and what they could mean for ISO 9001

When the ISO 9000 family of standards was revised in 2000, ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 were promoted as a consistent pair, as both had the same structure. ISO 9004 was conceived as a guide to quality management systems development and improvement, whereas ISO 9001 always has been an assessment standard.

Originally, two approaches to quality management systems development were prescribed in ISO 9000:1987; the customer-led approach where one establishes a system to meet the requirements ISO 9001 then enhances it to implement the recommendations in ISO 9004 and the management-led approach, where one develops a system in line with ISO 9004 then has it assessed to ISO 9001. The latter approach results in a quality management system that fulfils the business's needs and therefore avoids the charge that the system exists only to keep an ISO 9001 certificate.

Most organizations now use ISO 9001 to develop a quality management system, when it is clearly stated that it is to be used for contractual and assessment purposes thus indicating that the management-led approach failed to catch on.

A new standard

ISO 9004:2009 will be a different standard altogether. The standard will be no longer tied to ISO 9001, it will have a different structure and a different scope as reflected in its new title 'Managing for the sustained success of an organization – A quality management approach'.

The new version of ISO 9004 is based on the premise that satisfying customers might bring success, but to sustain success organizations need to go much further and satisfy the needs and expectations of all interested parties. It is an attempt at applying quality management principles to the pursuit of sustained success in an organization but it does not add anything new by way of management principles. It is suggesting that sustained success can be achieved by intelligent application of the eight quality management principles through a system of proactively managed processes that:

- constantly monitor and analyze the organization's environment
- define the needs and expectations of interested parties
- establish and maintain a mission, a vision and values consistent with the needs and expectations of interested parties
- clearly set out, implement and communicate a strategy and policies for fulfilling the mission and vision which supports the values
- identify, provide and manage the internal and external resources needed for the achievement of the objectives in the short and long term
- provide products that will continue to meet the needs and expectations of customers and other interested parties, on an ongoing basis.
- regularly monitor, measure, analyse and review the performance of the organization

The future of ISO 9001?

If we compare ISO 9004's new structure with ISO 9001 we can see the direction in which ISO 9001 might develop.

Section 4 on managing for sustained success addresses the operating environment and interested parties. In this respect it is completely different to ISO 9001. However, in the

ISO 9004:2009 – Towards sustained success

introduction in ISO 9001:2008, mention is made of changes in the business environment impacting the quality management system, so it would not be unreasonable to include this as a requirement in future editions of ISO 9001.

Section 5 on strategy and policy covers mission, vision, values, strategy and policy and to some extent shows how they are related. Its equivalent in ISO 9001 is 'management responsibility' but the heading in ISO 9004 is more sensible, wider in scope and more representative of best practice.

Section 6 on resource management covers a wider scope than in ISO 9001 and addresses additional resources including finance, knowledge, information, technology and natural resources all of which are in fact needed to deliver conforming product but which are currently excluded from ISO 9001.

Section 7 on process management is more generic than its equivalent in ISO 9001, 'product realization', and much wider in scope as it applies to all the organization's processes including those that are outsourced.

Section 8 on monitoring, measurement, analysis and review covers similar topics to section 8 in ISO 9001 except that improvement is addressed in section 9. Additional topics include self assessment, key performance indicators and benchmarking.

Section 9 on improvement, innovation and learning goes beyond the improvement provisions of ISO 9001 and addresses innovation and learning, two very important concepts for any organization aiming to sustain success.

In conclusion by widening its scope to embrace the language of the boardroom and by breaking the constraints imposed by the ISO 9001 structure, ISO 9004:2009 will be a better standard than its predecessor. However, whether the primary changes will eventually make their way into ISO 9001 as requirements rather depends on the perceptions of the user community. There is no doubt that successful organizations attract and retain customers because they go out of their way to ensure their continued satisfaction and hence go well beyond ISO 9001 certification. As more and more organizations gain the benefit from adopting the principles and practices expressed in ISO 9004:2009, this will begin to influence future revisions of ISO 9001. ISO 9004:2009 is currently at the final review stage but there is still much work to be done if it is to make an important contribution to quality management. The standard should be published later this year.

David Hoyle is a Hon Fellow of the CQI, an International management consultant with over 35 years' experience in quality management and author of the ISO 9000 Quality Systems Handbook now in its 6th edition...