

Standards at the Heart of Quality Management

Guide to quality management



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Introduction

Whatever your business does, you want to do it well. For your customers and clients, knowing that they can rely on you for consistent, high-quality products and/or services is what keeps them coming back. And if you're onto a winning formula, understanding that formula and being able to repeat it is the key to success.

How can a quality management system (QMS) help you?

A quality management system (QMS) enables organizations of any size to identify the things it does well and formalize those processes in writing. That could be prepping food in a kitchen, manufacturing a product or component or creating a staff training programme.

By establishing the exact processes behind what your business does, it's easier to ensure the consistent quality of your goods and services. And by setting quality objectives and targets, your business can keep improving and keep growing.

A QMS can help you...

- Boost profit and cut costs
- Win new business and customers
- Operate more effectively and reduce mistakes
- Increase productivity at every level
- Ensure consistent quality of products or services
- Improve customer service
- Boost employee engagement



What is a quality management system and how does it work?

A QMS is a set of processes that lay out how your business does what it does. It contains details about processes, staff responsibilities and operations within your business and on site, so that they can be easily replicated and ensure your organization's output is consistent.

An effective QMS also contains documentation, such as your objectives and targets, for example reducing errors on the production line or setting a response time for customer complaints.

What are the benefits of a QMS?

Boost productivity

By establishing the best way to do things and defining your business processes, everyone knows what they should be doing and how they should be doing it. A QMS makes it easier to achieve specific outcomes and maintain a certain standard, whether that's across sales, manufacturing, customer service or HR.

Improve quality

Customers and clients want to know what they're getting when they come to your business and a QMS can ensure that your output is of a reliable quality and that there are no unexpected surprises. This level of consistency also results in greater efficiency, less waste and improved profit margins.

Reduce errors and failures

Preventing mistakes that can cost a business time, money and even its reputation should be at the top of any organization's list of priorities. Putting in place checks and sign-offs; assigning quality responsibilities to staff; training and educating employees; these are all ways a QMS can boost your business' bottom line by reducing human error.

Continually improve

Following a QMS changes your mindset; instead of a box to tick, compliance becomes the starting point as your business focus shifts to exceeding those standards. This focus on quality puts your business on a path to the top, as you work to continuously improve and always do better.



Increase profits

A QMS can improve your bottom line in many ways. Agreed processes mean fewer errors, which cost time and money. And working more productively increases your output, boosting your profit margin. A high standard of quality also gives your customers and clients confidence, giving you a competitive edge and opening up new, lucrative opportunities.

Putting a quality management system in place

Putting a QMS in place will require time, consideration and the engagement of every staff member, but will reap both short- and long-term rewards. Senior management should lead the way, demonstrate the organization's new focus on quality and support staff whose roles and responsibilities may change with the use of a QMS. From start to finish, there are 6 key steps to embedding a QMS.

- 1 Analyse:** Identify the core areas of your business and design your QMS around how they operate: what do they do well? Can they be improved? Are customers happy with how these areas operate?
- 2 Plan:** Discuss existing quality processes with staff and how they could be improved before deciding what resources (including time and staff) you'll need. Pull together a plan for how you'll create and apply your QMS.
- 3 Educate:** Inform employees and staff about the upcoming changes, explaining why the changes are being made and how they will benefit them. Provide training around quality, covering the new quality policy and objectives.
- 4 Document:** Keep everything in writing, including quality policies, procedures, measurements, results, training materials and more.
- 5 Embed:** With all the planning and preparation done, now you can enact your new processes and procedures and start measuring their impact on quality.
- 6 Review:** Monitor, assess and refine processes over time to ensure continuous improvement and adherence to quality processes. Audits or routine assessments can help ensure quality doesn't start to slip once the QMS is in place.



Make quality management easier with standards

For any business looking to create a QMS, standards can offer guidance and best practice advice on the most effective and efficient way to do it.

Standards are a useful tool for businesses that, by showing the agreed “best” way to do things, can help any organization, of any size, anywhere, reduce costs and improve productivity.

What is ISO 9001?

BS EN ISO 9001 (or ISO 9001 for short) is the internationally-recognized QMS standard used by over a million organizations worldwide, from small independent retailers to global manufacturers.

It sets out the criteria for developing and implementing an effective QMS in your business, with a focus on key quality management principles such as customer focus, motivating and involving top management and continual improvement.



What are the benefits of ISO 9001?

If you choose to apply a QMS following the guidance of ISO 9001, you can reap the rewards not only of a QMS, but also of using standards.

Without ISO 9001, it can be tricky to know where to start when developing and using a QMS.

ISO 9001 sets you on the right path, showing you exactly what to do and how to do it in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step process that covers everything from getting started to implementing your QMS, maintaining documentation and continually improving.

With ISO 9001, you can...

- Develop a QMS for your business with expert guidance
- Apply a QMS that streamlines operations, making your business more efficiency and productive
- Reduce costs and avoid wasting time (compared to developing and applying a QMS without the standard)

What do businesses say about ISO 9001?

Paul Kalma

Global Quality Capability Lead, Capgemini

“By improving our processes, we improve how we’re working, reduce errors and make ourselves more efficient and resilient. It’s not about framed certificates on the wall – it’s about business benefits from improved quality.”

Richard Hill

Managing Director, ACO

“By challenging everyone to consider how they approach their tasks within the company’s developing environmental framework, there has been a new level of creative thinking, a greater sense of shared responsibility and a closer, more open relationship with our suppliers and customers.”

Geoff Aitkenhead

Asset Management Director, Scottish Water

“Perhaps the single biggest benefit of working to ISO 9001 for Scottish Water Asset Management is the requirement for greater structure and process in the management of our internal relationships. In addition to delivering specific project outputs we now focus on continual improvement and seek to demonstrate value at all times.”

Case study: How Fairford Medical found new opportunities with ISO 9001

Fairford Medical supplies transportable medical imaging technology, to NHS and private imaging departments, vets and research scientists. The business chose to implement [BS EN ISO 9001](#) as part of a wider strategy to increase their client base and improve efficiency throughout the organization.

Implementing a BS EN ISO 9001 quality management system enabled Fairford Medical to meet the requirements needed to tender for NHS contracts and work with NHS Trusts across the UK. This strategic decision rapidly boosted their growth, as being part of an NHS Framework opened the company up to lucrative new opportunities.

As well as achieving compliance with NHS requirements, adopting the BS EN ISO 9001 framework made their existing internal processes more efficient. By adhering to the standard's guidance, they implemented tighter quality controls as part of a business-wide quality management system.



For Fairford Medical, BS EN ISO 9001 was key to unlocking new business opportunities and increasing efficiency. The standard has enabled them to demonstrate their commitment to providing quality and trustworthy medical imaging equipment.

Plus, the flexibility of the standard meant that its processes could be easily adapted for a small, growing business. As a result, Fairford Medical was able to effectively organize and improve every element of their operations.

[Click here](#) to see how Fairford Medical expanded its services and boosted its bottom line by implementing ISO 9001.

Maria Cooksey
COO, Fairford Medical

“Adopting BS EN ISO 9001 has demonstrated to our customers and suppliers that we are committed to the quality, products and services of our business.”

Raise your quality management standards with ISO 9001

Certification and non-certification: Your choice

Lots of people think that using a standard means you have to get certified to that standard, but that's not the case. You can enjoy lots of benefits of a standard without certification – or any assessment at all.

You can simply download a copy of the standard and then follow the guidance that is most beneficial to your business, rather than implementing every part of the standard.

For example, you might identify areas of the standard that help you prevent mistakes on the production line or improve communication and processes between departments. These make your organization run more effectively and efficiently, without the need for a formal certification.

If you do choose to get certified, there are even more benefits to enjoy. To tender for some projects – such as government contracts – you need to be certified to a standard; you can also put your certification on your marketing to attract new customers and show off your commitment to quality.

BSI or any other member of UKAS can help you to prepare for and achieve certification.



Standards are a tool for businesses to improve how they do things; that's how they add value at every level.

Want to learn more about ISO 9001?

[Guide: Benefits of ISO 9001](#)

Explore how ISO 9001 can benefit your business and help you boost your bottom line.

[Next steps: Guide to implementing ISO 9001](#)

Thinking about implementing ISO 9001? Here are the steps you need to take to get ready.

[Implementing ISO 9001: The overview guide](#)

This guide to implementation will talk you through the language of standards and how to implement ISO 9001.

Start your journey to better quality management

To find out more about [ISO 9001](#) and how a quality management standard can help your business improve productivity, efficiency and profitability, visit [BSI Knowledge](#) or [contact the BSI team today](#).

