



Arriva, one of the UK's largest bus operators, achieves a competitive advantage with BS OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management certification

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Christine Dargon,
Safety Operations Manager, Arriva UK Bus

Customer objectives

- A consistent occupational health and safety management system
- Reduce workplace accidents and illnesses
- Achieve a competitive advantage
- Strengthen the Arriva brand
- Be seen as a leader in the passenger transport sector

Customer benefits

- Consistent, robust management of health and safety
- A culture of continuous improvement and potentially fewer accidents
- Internationally recognized certification from BSI
- Improved employee awareness and engagement
- Reassurance to clients and prospects
- Competitive advantage

Customer background

Arriva was formed in 1997, when several companies and cultures were brought together under the new Arriva brand. Today, the Arriva group is part of Deutsche Bahn and provides a range of commercial and contracted bus and train services across Europe. In the UK, Arriva is one of the largest bus operators, with 6,000 buses and employing 18,000 people. It provides services in London, the north-east, north-west and south-east of England, Yorkshire, the Midlands and Wales.

In 2014, Arriva achieved certification to BS OHSAS 18001, the best practice framework for an occupational health and safety management system, at all its operating companies that comprise UK Bus.

Why certification?

Arriva's bus services are in constant use by millions of passengers. The safety of these passengers and its employees is one of the company's core brand values and occupational health and safety within its support and services operations is where BS OHSAS 18001 comes into play.

A safe and healthy workplace and compliance with the law is underpinned by BS OHSAS 18001. It has allowed Arriva to develop a robust system to help it to identify hazards, assess risks and take appropriate measures to mitigate consequences.

Christine Dargon, Safety Operations Manager, for Arriva's UK bus operations explains, "We developed our internal audit process over a period of four years and by 2012 we'd formally launched our revised health and safety management system. We already had a lot of good practices in place, but we hadn't documented them terribly well," she says. "We naturally progressed to considering BS OHSAS 18001 to improve our documentation and help us ensure our system was effective."

BS OHSAS 18001 was initially highlighted during a BSI lead auditor training course attended by Adrian Lancaster, the internal Health and Safety Auditor for Arriva's UK Bus. "On my return I discussed the merits of the standard with Christine, it was presented to our director, received the approval of the UK Bus Leadership, and at the end of 2012 we took the decision to adopt BS OHSAS 18001 and seek certification" says Adrian.

Benefits

Arriva has strong regional management teams that are well placed to serve customers locally

and they work with private and public sector partners to deliver effective transport solutions. Although the work activities carried out in the 7 operating companies and their bus and coach operation – from vehicle maintenance, refuelling and cleaning, to back-office administration – health and safety issues were being managed differently across their 88 locations.

"BS OHSAS 18001 requires a consistent approach, and this has been a major benefit for us," says Christine. "It has made our system much stronger."

She continues, "From the start, we decided to go for a single certification that would cover all our sites. This meant we would all pass or fail together, so we've had to work as a team to achieve it, sharing best practice."

Adrian adds that the certification process has given a new injection of enthusiasm to health and safety management at Arriva, with "an outstanding level of commitment", not only from its specialist health and safety professionals, but at all levels right across the company.

A specific area of improvement has been the process for management review of health and safety, which was previously conducted at PLC level. This is now carried out in more detail at divisional level by the Arriva UK Bus leadership team. "The results of the review are fed into our forward plans, making them much more effective," says Christine.

Most important of all, BS OHSAS has given Arriva a commercial advantage over competitors. "When our operating companies tender for local authority contracts, for example, certification to the standard will make the pre-qualification process a lot easier," she says. "The fact that we're audited by BSI – an independent third party – provides customers and prospects with critical reassurance."

Implementation

Having received support for the project from UK Bus leadership at the end of 2012, Christine and Adrian began the process of implementing BS OHSAS 18001 in early 2013.

"There was some apprehension about the proposed implementation of BS OHSAS 18001," says Adrian. To equip us for the certification journey, BSI was engaged in January 2013 to conduct an initial two-day training programme for all 14 health and safety managers. "Once familiar with the requirements of the standard the health and safety managers really got behind the implementation and it went very smoothly," he says.

Following an initial company-level gap analysis by BSI in March 2013, health and safety managers were briefed on where changes were needed and action plans were put in place. Christine and Adrian then conducted their own individual gap analysis for each Arriva location that was subsequently earmarked by BSI for an audit inspection that year. "It was a big commitment – for three months we focused entirely on implementing BS OHSAS 18001," says Christine.

She adds, "This focused approach was worthwhile. I was pleasantly surprised by how well our current practices fitted in with the standard. We only had to make modest adjustments to meet the standard, but we also chose to reinforce awareness – for example, through some dedicated, interactive safety days."

BSI's role

"BSI has been a huge support," says Christine. "Its gap analysis was very comprehensive. It was great having a third party coming in with another set of eyes to help us identify areas for improvement. It gave us a clear plan of action and made us more comfortable with the audit and certification process."

Adrian adds, "BSI's training for our health and safety managers was very thorough, getting us up to speed on BS OHSAS 18001, explaining the terminology used and highlighting key areas."

A formal process to deliver annual independent audits in each operating company is in place, with Adrian aiming to visit a third of all locations once a year. BSI then provides the independent assessment to confirm whether the company is continuing to work to the standard, through a six-monthly assessment at UK Bus Head Office and a rolling programme of surveillance assessments conducted at a sample of sites.

Next steps

The company's next priority is to enhance reporting of 'near misses' in accident statistics. "It's all about continual improvement," says Christine. "It was never just about having a certificate on the wall; it is about changing the way people look at safety and making a difference to the business."

She concludes, "This has been demonstrated in the way that managers have taken ownership of health and safety issues, ensuring we continue to meet the requirements of the standard."