



Introducing Annex SL Whitepaper

The new high level structure for all
management system standards of the future

Overview and background

Over the years ISO has published many management system standards for topics ranging from quality and environment to information security and business continuity management. In the past, despite sharing common elements, ISO management systems standards have all had different structures. This, in turn, results in some confusion and difficulties at the implementation stage.

In order to understand the importance of structure in management system standards, we will take a step back and look at ISO's definition of a management system and some of the benefits of implementing an effective management system. ISO defines a management system as a set of procedures an organization needs to follow in order to meet its objectives. A management system standard provides a model to follow when setting up and operating a management system.

Why a new high-level structure?

Most organizations have more than one management system standard to implement and certify. Doing this individually takes up a lot of extra time and resources, so there is a clear need to find a way of integrating and combining the standards in the best possible way. The management system standards to date each presents different structures, requirements and terminology, so integration has proved challenging.

In order to address this problem, ISO developed Annex SL – the framework for a generic management system and the blueprint for all new and revised management system standards going forward. To address industry specific needs, additional requirements for individual sectors will be added to this generic framework.

How will this affect organizations?

This high level structure will be rolled out across all new and revised management system standards to ensure consistency and compatibility. With Annex SL in place, management system implementers can look forward to less conflicts, duplication, confusion and the misunderstandings that took place as a result of different management system standard structures.

Management system auditors will now use a core set of generic requirements across disciplines and industry sectors.

More about Annex SL

All management system standards of the future will have the same high level structure, identical core text, as well as common terms and definitions. Whilst the high level structure cannot be changed, sub-clauses and discipline-specific text can be added.

Annex SL applies to all management system standards, such as full ISO standards, Publicly Available Specifications (PAS) and Technical Specifications (TS). Annex SL's high level structure contains 10 clauses:

Clause 1:	Scope
Clause 2:	Normative references
Clause 3:	Terms and definition
Clause 4:	Context of the organization
Clause 5:	Leadership
Clause 6:	Planning
Clause 7:	Support
Clause 8:	Operation
Clause 9:	Performance evaluation
Clause 10:	Improvement

Clause 1: **Scope**

The scope sets out the intended outcomes of the management system. The outcomes are industry specific and should be aligned with the context of the organization (clause 4).

Clause 2: **Normative references**

Provides details of the reference standards or publications relevant to the particular standard.

Clause 3: **Terms & definitions**

Details terms and definition applicable to the specific standard in addition to any formal related terms and definitions standard.

More about Annex SL

Clause 4: Context of the organization

Clause 4 consists of four sub-clauses:

- 4.1 Understanding the organization and its context
- 4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties
- 4.3 Determining the scope of the management system
- 4.4 The management system

As the flagstone of a management system, clause 4 determines why the organization is here. As part of the answer to this question, the organization needs to identify internal and external issues that can impact on its intended outcomes, as well as all interested parties and their requirements. It also needs to document its scope and set the boundaries of the management system – all in line with the business objectives.

Clause 5: Leadership

Clause 5 comprises three sub-clauses:

- 5.1 Leadership and commitment
- 5.2 Policy
- 5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities

The new high level structure places particular emphasis on leadership, not just management as set out in previous standards. This means top management now has greater accountability and involvement in the organization's management system. They need to integrate the requirements of the management system into the organization's core business process, ensure the management system achieves its intended outcomes and allocate the necessary resources. Top management is also responsible for communicating the importance of the management system and heighten employee awareness and involvement.

Clause 6: Planning

Clause 6 includes two sub-clauses:

- 6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities
- 6.2 Management system objectives and planning to achieve them

Clause 6 brings risk-based thinking to the front. Once the organization has highlighted risks and opportunities in clause 4, it needs to stipulate how these will be addressed through planning. The planning phase looks at what, who, how and when these risks must be addressed. This proactive approach replaces preventative action and reduces the need for corrective actions later on. Particular focus is also placed on the objectives of the management system. These should be measurable, monitored, communicated, aligned to the policy of the management system and updated when needed.

Clause 7: Support

Clause 7 consists of five sub-clauses:

- 7.1 Resources
- 7.2 Competence
- 7.3 Awareness
- 7.4 Communication
- 7.5 Documented information

After addressing the context, commitment and planning, organizations will have to look at the support needed to meet their goals and objectives. This includes resources, targeted internal and external communications, as well as documented information that replaces previously used terms such as documents, documentation and records.

Clause 8: Operation

Clause 8 has one sub-clause:

- 8.1 Operational planning and control

The bulk of the management system requirements lies within this single clause. Clause 8 addresses both in-house and outsourced processes, while the overall process management includes adequate criteria to control these processes, as well as ways to manage planned and unintended change.

Clause 9: Performance evaluation

Clause 9 is formed of three sub-clauses:

- 9.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation
- 9.2 Internal audit
- 9.3 Management review

Here organizations need to determine what, how and when things are to be monitored, measured, analyzed and evaluated. An internal audit is also part of this process to ensure the management system conforms to the requirements of the organization as well as the standard, and is successfully implemented and maintained. The final step, management review, looks at whether the management system is suitable, adequate and effective.

Clause 10: Improvement

With two sub-clauses in place, Clause 10 looks at how non-conformities and corrective actions should be managed:

- 10.1 Non-conformity and corrective action
- 10.2 Continual improvement

In an ever-changing business world, not everything always goes according to plan. Clause 10 looks at ways to address non-conformities and corrective action, as well as strategies for improvement on a continual basis.

.....core text, common terms and definitions to aid integration.....

The benefits of using management system standards

Using standards can provide a number of key benefits to an organization:

Improved business performance

Using standards ensures all business processes are integrated and aligned with the business strategies of the organization. Used as a business management tool, this will improve performance, remove complexity, drive real value and embed continual improvement.

Improved risk and opportunity management

The requirements to identify risks and opportunities affecting an organization ensures they are managed more effectively thereby improving operational efficiency, reducing duplication, saving both time and money.

Enhanced reputation

Adopting a standard sends a clear message to existing and prospective customers that the organization is taking a leading, innovative and proactive approach to managing the business.

Increased efficiency

By providing a robust framework and focus, standards can increase operational efficiency, reducing expensive mistakes thereby saving time and money.

Increased engagement

By adopting a management system, an organization can ensure all employees are working to common goals driven from the business strategy.

Improved integration

The new common structure for all management system standards will ensure that integration of more than one system will be smoother, without investing a lot of extra time and money.

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