

Facilities Management from A to Z



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Quality Systems

A Quality Management System (QMS) establishes a framework for how an organisation manages its key processes. They can help whether the organisation offers products or services and regardless of its size or industry. They can also help new businesses to establish by ensuring that processes meet recognised standards, clarifying business objectives and avoiding expensive mistakes.

The British Standard (BS) 5750 for QMS's was published in 1979, and in 1983 the National Quality Campaign was launched, using BS5750 as its main theme. Since then the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) 9000 series has become the internationally recognised standard for QMS's. It comprises a number of standards that specify the requirements for the documentation, implementation and maintenance of a QMS.

The ISO 9000 series, which includes 9001 and 9004, is based around eight quality management principles that managers can use as a framework for improvements to the business. These principles are customer focus, leadership, involvement of people, a focus on processes, a system based approach to management, continual improvement, a factual approach to decision-making and mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

The ISO 9001:2008 standard has four elements that are particularly relevant to facilities managers. The first of these is management responsibility and the importance of ensuring that management shows commitment to the QMS and develops it according to customers' needs and the organisation's objectives. The second is resource management and the need to ensure that the people, infrastructure and work environment needed to implement and improve quality systems are in place.

The third is product realisation and the need to deliver what customers want, looking at areas such as sales processes, design and development, purchasing, production or service activities. The final element is measurement, analysis and improvement to check whether customers have been satisfied by carrying out other measurements of the system's effectiveness.

Certification is the official recognition by an accredited body that an organisation has achieved a particular standard. Having an external body certify that the QMS meets the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 can be helpful in the ongoing management process as well as providing assurance to customers and other stakeholders that the QMS is robust.

Following certification a representative of the certifying body will conduct twice-yearly visits to ensure that the organisation is still meeting the requirements of the standard. These audits can be daunting but should be viewed by the facility manager as an opportunity for continuous improvement rather than an arduous task to be endured.

QMS certification bodies are accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and a list of accredited bodies is shown on their website www.ukas.com