ISO 9001

Debunking
the myths

What is ISO 9001?

ISO 9001 is a standard that sets out the requirements for a quality management system. It helps businesses and organizations be more efficient and improve customer satisfaction.

Is it very complicated?

No. ISO 9001 can seem difficult at first but the concepts behind the standard are very simple. The seven quality management principles are a good place to start and will be of great help when it comes to defining your quality management system. In addition, a lot of supporting information is available from your ISO member, the group of experts responsible for the standard and the ISO Website (**www.iso.org**).

Isn't it an old document designed for the way businesses worked in the 1990s?

First published in 1987, ISO 9001 has been around for many years, but it is regularly updated to ensure that it remains relevant to today's business environment. In its latest version, ISO 9001:2015 incorporates elements such as a stronger focus on stakeholders and the wider context of an organization to fit the evolving needs of modern business.

The standard is designed to be flexible enough for use by different types of organizations. For this reason, it does not specify what the objectives relating to "quality" or "meeting customer needs" should be. Instead, it requires organizations to define these objectives themselves and continually improve their processes in order to reach them.

Isn't it the preserve of big business?

No. The standard can be used by any organization, regardless of size or type. While small companies may not have staff dedicated to quality, they can still enjoy the benefits of implementing the standard. Tips for small businesses can be found in the publication *ISO 9001 for small businesses. What to do*, available from your ISO member or through the ISO Store.

Is it very expensive?

The standard itself is reasonably priced and can be purchased from the ISO member in your country or through the ISO Store. Getting certified to the standard – which is not compulsory – will incur extra cost that can vary according to the certification body you choose and where you are based (ISO does not perform certification). Some companies may also decide to use an external consultant. This is not strictly necessary, however, and a lot of helpful advice can be found in supporting publications available from ISO and its members.

Isn't it just for manufacturers?

No, the standard can be used by any organization, including service providers such as hospitals, banks or universities. In fact, the most recent version of the standard was specifically designed to be more accessible to organizations outside the manufacturing sector.

Will it help me increase my profits?

ISO 9001 can help bring financial benefits in a number of ways:
- Using ISO 9001 can increase productivity and efficiency, thus lowering the costs of an organization.
- Using ISO 9001 can improve customer experience, resulting in repeat business, increased sales and additional income for your business.
- Getting certified to ISO 9001 can enhance your reputation, attracting new customers to your organization.

Does it mean lots of extra paperwork?

Not necessarily! The standard requires you to document a number of things but, actually, these are relatively limited. Its flexibility means that you will be able to find a way of using it that fits your organization without requiring unnecessary paperwork.

What benefits will it bring to my business or organization ?

Implementing a quality management system will help you :

- Assess the **overall context** of your organization to define who is affected by your work and what they expect from you. This will enable you to clearly **state your objectives** and **identify new business opportunities**.

- Put your **customers first**, making sure you consistently meet their needs and enhance their satisfaction. This can lead to more repeat custom, new clients and increased business for your organization.

- Work in a **more efficient way** as all your processes will be aligned and understood by everyone in the business or organization. This increases productivity and efficiency, bringing internal costs down.

- Meet the necessary **statutory and regulatory requirements**.

- **Expand into new markets**, as some sectors and clients require ISO 9001 before doing business.

- **Identify and address the risks** associated with your organization.