

## IRCA inform

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## Feature

### ISO 9001's guiding light

**With its new emphasis on process auditing, ISO 9001:2000 was always going to be fraught with difficulties. But, as Brian Henry explains, help is at hand with the Auditing Practices Group, which aims to provide sound advice for auditors**

The ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group was created to respond to a need that had been identified by the ISO 9000 Advisory Group (IAG). The IAG itself had been previously established - under the auspices and with the support of ISO/TC 176, the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and ISO/CASCO - to identify and react to any perceived threats to the credibility of ISO 9001:2000.

It was recognized that some auditors might have difficulty in making the transition from the former clause-based style of auditing to the new approach of process auditing, which was needed to effectively and consistently evaluate conformity to ISO 9001:2000. The situation was further complicated by a new shift in emphasis on the importance of certain requirements, such as management responsibility and continual improvement with a minimum of documented procedures.

#### The A team

The IAG decided that the perceived problem would be most effectively addressed with the help of a group of experts. This group would represent standards writers, certification bodies, accreditation bodies, consultants, trainers and, most importantly, currently practising auditors. The IAG took its recommendation to the International Accreditation Forum at its plenary in Berlin in September 2002. This resulted in a resolution to form such a group. The IAG also took its recommendation to ISO TC176 at its plenary in Acapulco in October 2002, which similarly resolved to form this group.

This joint initiative by ISO TC176 and the International Accreditation Forum resulted in the establishment of the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group. Its first meeting was held in Sydney in February 2003. The group's two co-conveners, Alex Ezrakhovich and Randy Dougherty, represent the two founding bodies ISO/TC 176 and IAF respectively.

Members have been appointed from both ISO TC176 and IAF, and also individuals from ISO/CASCO, IATCA, and industry. The membership represents a wide range of organizations which are stakeholders in ISO 9000 third party certification. These include: companies with certificated QMS,

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standards writers, certification bodies, accreditation bodies, consultants, trainers and currently practising auditors.

#### Aiming high

The goal of the Auditing Practices Group was, essentially, to provide advice to auditors. This would help them improve the value of third party certification audits of organizations with a certificated QMS and then ultimately be able to pass on these benefits to their customers. A primary consideration was to develop guidance that was practical, useful and usable for a third party certification auditor when auditing a QMS based on ISO 9001:2000.

The Auditing Practices Group agreed that the guidance needed to be written in concise and direct language. 'The papers are short, and easy to read and understand,' says Dougherty. The guidance would include practical examples and other tools, with a 'how to' approach. The Auditing Practices Group also recognized that it was vital that the guidance was widely promoted and readily available. As a result, it can now be viewed on a public website.

So far, 19 guidance papers have been produced, covering:

- the need for a two stage approach to auditing
- measuring QMS effectiveness and improvements
- identification of processes
- understanding the process approach
- determination of the 'where appropriate' processes
- auditing the 'where appropriate' requirements
- demonstrating conformity to the standard
- linking an audit of a particular task, activity or process to the over all system
- auditing continual improvement
- auditing a QMS which has minimum documentation
- how to audit top management processes
- the role and value of the audit checklist
- scope of ISO 9001:2000, scope of quality management systems and defining scope of certification
- value-added auditing
- auditing competence and the effectiveness of actions taken
- effective use of ISO 19011:2002
- auditing statutory and regulatory requirements
- auditing quality policy and quality objectives

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- auditing the control of monitoring and measuring devices

#### Looking to the future

The Auditing Practices Group has had three further meetings since Sydney. These meetings took place in Geneva in June 2003 and in Bucharest

in October 2003. At the most recent meeting in March 2004 in Vancouver, the Auditing Practices Group agreed to develop further guidance on the following topics:

- auditing customer satisfaction
- writing nonconformities that are understandable, useful and therefore add value
- reviewing responses to nonconformities to assure correction and corrective action that is effective

Stakeholders and users of the website are encouraged to provide feedback on the guidance already provided and propose further topics where guidance might be useful.

More information about the Auditing Practices Group and the guidance papers can be found on the website: [http://isotc176sc2.elysium-ltd.net/APG\\_index.html](http://isotc176sc2.elysium-ltd.net/APG_index.html). The paper on value-added auditing is featured in this issue of IRCA INform.

#### About the author

**Brian Henry is a European-qualified chartered electrical and mechanical engineer, and a Fellow of the Institute of Quality Assurance. He is registered as a lead auditor with IRCA, and is an IRCA reviewing officer qualified to undertake QMS, EMS, EMAS, AS/EN 9100, TickIT, BS 7799, QS 9000, product certification and personnel certification audits on behalf of international accreditation bodies such as UKAS. Brian is the UK principal expert for QMS auditing and has been closely involved in the development of the ISO 9000 series. He has been seconded by IAF and ISO TC 176 to participate in the ISO 9001:2000 Oversight Group to develop auditor competence criteria for certification body auditors. He is a member of the ISO/IAF/CASCO Auditing Practices Group for the development and issue of guidance to ISO 9001:2000 auditors.**

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### Golden opportunity

**Derek Gravestock from Batalas Ltd discusses how QMS requirements have changed in the wake of the ISO 9001:2000 transition and recognizes the dynamic new environment as one that can be highly beneficial for organizations**

Batalas and its partner organisations overseas deliver training and implementation support throughout Europe, the Americas and south-east Asia. The main lesson to be learnt from the new standard was made clear when Batalas designed its range of IRCA-approved courses.

The first attempt revealed how differently each designer interpreted the requirements. This was further complicated by attempts to modify the ISO 9000:1994 courses. This resulted in a disjointed programme which, while satisfying all the component elements stipulated by IRCA, did not address the intent of the standard. The solution was obvious - if top management commitment is required, have a top manager view the requirements. So, although the useful details of the course were retained, an entirely different programme emerged.

#### Learning from experience

The early problems Batalas encountered with course design have also been experienced by other organizations during transition. These mistakes have not led to failure to obtain registration but they have resulted in a less than fully effective QMS. It is never too late to change your QMS. A review of the most common issues organizations have faced, together with some practical suggestions for improvement, may be helpful.

#### A process approach

The process approach was designed to link the QMS with the delivery of business objectives. By doing so, top management would be more involved and committed to the QMS, certainly more so than if they saw the QMS as nothing more than a manual containing documented procedures for their staff.

Many organizations have interpreted the process approach as process mapping of its quality processes. If this gave some value to the QMS then this would justify the expenditure of effort. However, if process mapping merely replaces existing documented procedures then the aim of the changes to

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the standard has not been recognized or achieved. A simple check to see if the process approach is correctly structured is to compare the performance measures of the key QMS processes with those used by top management. With the exception of some purely financial objectives there should be a direct link between the two.

If there is a misalignment then the best solution is to re-define the key processes. This should not be seen as purely a desktop exercise which just requires some modification to computer-generated process charts. It should be a top management exercise conducted as a workshop. In this way, top management involvement and commitment will be guaranteed. More importantly, if top management has not already realized the importance and relevance of the QMS to the operation of the business, this exercise will reinforce the issue.

### More than a procedure

Internal auditing, when used correctly, is a great stimulus for improvement. Used incorrectly it only highlights negative aspects of an organization, causing its results to be disregarded by key managers.

The solution lies in the selection and training of internal auditors. Training an internal auditor to the 1994 standard was more simple. Essentially, it asked that the auditor checked that what was done conformed to documented procedures, and that they recorded non-conformities in an accurate manner. Most senior managers avoided this role, preferring to delegate the task to more junior staff.

With the 2000 standard there is still a need to conduct internal audits to check compliance with documented procedures. However, this should only be a relatively minor element of internal auditing, as all the requirements of the standard will not be met by documented procedures alone.

Therefore internal auditors must understand the requirements of the standard. This is a difficult task for internal auditors acting on a part-time basis. As the 2000 standard is based on good management practice, Batalas has found that the very best internal auditors are middle or senior managers. They do not have to memorise the requirements of the standard clause by clause, they just relate what they see to good management practice and

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then refer to the standard for confirmation. There is another excellent reason why managers should be involved in internal audits, and that is the need to audit processes to ensure they are effective, and to identify opportunities for improvement.

#### A new focus

The new standard has provided a great opportunity for the quality professional. The broadening of the requirements particularly the introduction of performance measures, the process approach, top management commitment and continual improvement ensure that the standard and real life practices can be aligned. To make sure that this opportunity is realised organisations need to concentrate on two areas and: ensure that the structure of the QMS processes is frequently reviewed and amended to reflect the changes within the business; and improve the skills of the internal auditors, enabling internal auditing to add real value to business performance

There are many organisations that have made an excellent start and show willingness to demonstrate that embracing the intent of the 2000 standard is highly beneficial to the performance of their organisation. However, the long-term future of ISO 9001:2000 does depend upon the majority of organisations seizing this opportunity and not regarding registration as the ultimate goal.

#### Implementing a successful QMS

- if top management commitment is needed, have a top manager view the requirements
- compare the performance measures of key QMS processes with those used by top management
- internal auditors should include middle or senior managers a fully effective QMS is one that is reviewed frequently
- long-term future of the ISO 9001:2000 standard does depend upon the majority of organizations seizing this opportunity and not regarding registration as the ultimate goal

#### About the author

**Derek Gravestock is a director of Batalas Limited. He moved from manufacturing into general management and then consultancy. Recent projects include the development of a productivity training programme for BMW, and quality improvement programmes in ten eastern European countries.**

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### Certification in India

**The National Accreditation Board for Auditors and Training (NABAT) is the Indian national body for certifying auditors and training courses for auditors, and is a constituent of the Quality Council of India (QCI). Girdhar J Gyani, secretary general of the QCI and Vipin Sahni, deputy director of NABAT, discuss the objectives and activities of their organizations, and examine the future of the certification system in India**

India was one of the top ten countries for growth in the number of ISO 9000 certifications in 2003. Its number of certifications grew from 5,554 at the end of 2001 to 8,110 at the end of 2002 - an increase of 2,556 (statistics taken from the ISO survey of ISO 9000 and ISO 14001 certificates, twelfth cycle).

The number of ISO 14001 certifications has also risen dramatically: with an increase of 205, there were 400 certifications at the end of 2001 and 605 at the end of 2002. Quality is a dynamic and constantly evolving industry in India; to meet the increasing need for strategic direction, the services of QCI were announced on 1 April 2000.

QCI is a non profit, autonomous body formed by the joint initiative of Indian Industry - which is represented by the three premier industry associations, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) - and the government of India. This long-needed national accreditation structure aimed to consider local requirements while formulating various schemes based on mutually-agreed international standards and guidelines.

The objectives of the QCI are to:

- establish an accreditation structure in the country
- provide correct and unbiased information on quality and related standards
- spread the quality movement in India
- facilitate the upgrade of equipment and techniques related to quality
- represent India's interest in international forums
- help establish brand equity of Indian products and services

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### Certification in India

#### Activities

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) offers accreditation to management system certification bodies in accordance with international standards ISO/IEC Guide 62 and 66 supported by the guidance of the IAF

The National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) offers accreditation to the laboratories in accordance with ISO 17025.

The National Accreditation Board for Auditors and Training (NABAT) offers certification to QMS and EMS auditors. It also offers certification to the training course providers who offer training courses for the QMS and EMS auditors, namely lead auditor training courses and internal auditor training courses.

The QCI also spreads awareness about the need of quality of the products and services in the industry and to consumers as part of the national quality campaign. The QCI provides responses to the queries received about the implementation of quality and standards. NABCB is a member of the IAF and of the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC). NABCB is also a signatory to the multilateral arrangement (MLA) of mutual recognition of the accreditations granted by the signatories of the MLA of IAF and PAC.

Similarly, NABL is a member of International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and of Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC). NABL is also a signatory to the MLA of mutual recognition of the accreditations granted by the signatories of the MLA.

#### Certification

The objectives of NABAT are:

- to be equally accessible to all the applicants (auditor and training course) who wish to be certified
- to upgrade the criteria in line with international developments to foster improvements in the quality of certified auditors and training courses in India
- to be impartial in its decision on criteria and certification

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- to seek international recognition of the certification scheme
- to be financially self-sufficient to conduct business professionally

NABAT is guided by a board of 11 members which includes various stakeholders who ensure that all these objectives are met consistently. The chairman of the board is appointed by the chairman of the QCI, based on the proposals received from the members of the council in consultation with the governing body members of the QCI. The term of the board is two years and is renewable for another term of two years based on acceptance of the members.

The board formulates its policies in line with international standards and guides. It is responsible for all the decisions taken by the secretariat and the various other constituents, like the certification committee and appeals committee. NABAT is well supported by the certification committee which

takes decisions regarding the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of NABAT certification, based on the assessment and other reports presented to the committee by the secretariat. It also advises the board on the issues related to the certification of auditors and training courses. NABAT is also supported by a panel of experts, reviewing officers and assessors.

### Failings of certification bodies

The effectiveness of a management system audit is the most widely discussed subject in the field of conformity assessment. It is even more aggressively debated when the auditor is certified with an auditor certification body. Some of the auditors who have been conducting audits as per ISO 9000:1994 have been missing the intent of the 2000 version.

Some of the factors which have contributed to the decrease in the quality of auditors and hence audits include: the quality of subcontracted courses and the poor exchange of information related to training course certification.

NABAT and IRCA have debated these issues and have been working on an agreement of mutual recognition. This agreement will ensure that there is regular exchange of information between the two organizations regarding the certified training courses in India by IRCA and NABAT. Wherever

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possible the two organizations will also work mutually to conduct certification and annual surveillance assessments.

#### About the authors

**Mr Gyani has been at the forefront of the quality movement in India in various capacities. Since November 2003 he has been the secretary general of QCI. Previously, he led the Indian Institute of Quality Management (IIQM), providing training and consultancy to a number of organizations.**

**Mr Sahni is head of NABAT and is responsible for implementing the policies of the board. He has been with the QCI for the last five years. Prior to the current assignment he worked with a leading training and consultancy organization in India.**

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### Is your audit adding value?

**The first in our new series of guidance papers by the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group discusses the pitfalls of value-added auditing and provides some good advice**

We hear so much about the importance of adding value during QMS audits, but what does this really mean? Is it possible to add value without compromising the integrity of the audit or providing consultancy?

In principle, all audits should add value, but this is not always the case. This article provides guidance on what constitutes a value-added audit, and the various situations that are likely to be encountered in the context of second or third-party audits.

#### What does it mean?

There are several dictionary definitions of 'value', but all focus on the concept of something being useful. 'Adding value' therefore means to make something more useful. Some organizations have used the ISO 9000 to develop QMSs that are integrated into the way they do business, and are useful in helping them to achieve their strategic business objectives – in other words, they add value to the organization.

Conversely, other organizations may have simply created a bureaucratic set of procedures and records that do not reflect the reality of the way the organization actually works, and simply add costs, without being useful. In other words, they do not add value.

#### A question of approach

A non-value-added approach asks: 'What procedures do we have to write to get ISO 9001 certification?' A value-added approach asks the question: 'How can we use our ISO 9001-based QMS to help us improve our business?' Thus, a value-added auditor should ask: How can we ensure that an audit is useful to an organization in maintaining and improving its QMS? (It should be recognised, however, that there may be other perspectives that need to be taken into consideration.)

A value-added third-party audit should be useful:

- to the certified organization, by providing information to top management regarding the organization's ability to meet strategic objectives.

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### Is your audit adding value?

Also by identifying improvement opportunities and possible areas of risk, and problems which, if resolved, will enhance the organization's performance

- to the organization's customers by enhancing the organization's ability to provide conforming product to the certification body, by improving the credibility of the third party certification process

Some tips for value-added auditing:

#### Audit planning

- understand the auditee's expectations/corporate culture
- any specific concerns to be addressed (output from previous audits)?  
risk analysis of industry sector/specific to organization
- pre-evaluation of statutory/regulatory requirements
- appropriate audit team selection to achieve audit objectives
- adequate time allocation

#### Audit technique

- focus more on the process, and less on procedures. Some documented procedures, work instructions, check-lists etc may be necessary in order for the organization to plan and control its processes, but the driving force should be process performance
- focus more on results and less on records. In a similar fashion, some records may be necessary in order for the organization to provide objective evidence that its processes are effective (generating the planned results) but the value-added auditor should be aware of and give credit for other forms of evidence.
- remember the eight quality management principles
- use the plan-do-check-act approach to evaluate the organization's process effectiveness:
  - has the process been planned
  - is it being carried out according to plan?
  - are the planned results being achieved?
  - are opportunities for improvement being identified and implemented by: correcting non-conformities; by identifying root causes of problems and implementing corrective action; by identifying trends, and the need for preventive action; by innovation

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### Is your audit adding value?

- adopt a holistic approach to evidence gathering throughout the audit, instead of focusing on individual clauses of ISO 9001

#### Analysis and decision

- put the findings into perspective (risk assessment/common sense)
- relate findings to the effect on the organization's ability to provide conforming product (see ISO 9001 clause 1.1)

#### Report and follow-up

- sensible reporting of audit findings
- different approaches may be required depending on:
  - > the organization's maturity (zones 1, 2, 3 and 4)
  - > the level of confidence in the organization's QMS
  - > the risks involved
  - > the auditee's attitude and commitment to the audit process (proactive/reactive)
- ensure that any cultural aspects are taken into consideration
- emphasize positive findings as appropriate
- will the solution proposed by the organization in response to negative findings be useful?
- reports should be objective and focused on the right audience. Top management will probably have expectations that are different from those of the management representative

**This article is an edited version of 'Value-added auditing' from the website of the ISO 9001 Auditing and Practices Group and is reproduced courtesy of ISO and the IAF. These papers were developed on current best practice and therefore have not been formally endorsed as IAF guidance or ISO TC176 interpretations. For further information about the Auditing and Practices Group website at [http://isotc176sc2.elysium-ltd.net/APG\\_index.html](http://isotc176sc2.elysium-ltd.net/APG_index.html)**

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### Competence and training

**As more and more organizations seek to replace a reliance on documented procedures with a focus on staff competence, where, asks Stephen Russell of the Training Foundation, is the auditor to look to gain confidence that the training delivered is effective?**

#### Establishing needs

ISO 9001 requires organizations to identify the competence requirements of any role or function affecting quality, and the auditor should seek answers to the following questions:

- what process, method or framework has been applied?
- are there national or international occupational or other competence frameworks that apply?
- how is competence to be demonstrated and how will an acceptable level of competence be identified?
- with no definition or measure of competence, an organization cannot identify where gaps may exist that directly impact upon the product or service delivery

A competence gap equals a training need. A Learning and Skills Council report in the UK recently revealed that over four million workers lack the skills needed to do their job and that one third of employers had no training plan to address this problem. This is clearly an issue for the auditor, who should ascertain what review processes exist within the organization to check skill levels and how shortfalls would be addressed.

#### Effective training

For the majority of organizations who have a process for identifying training needs and a training plan, the question is different: how do you know the training you deliver is effective?

Because competence must be a measurable outcome from any training, the training event itself should be measurable and should provide an assessment of the learning that has taken place and the new level of competence reached by each participant. Many training objectives are poorly written and do not clearly set out all three elements necessary for an effective objective. To write a good learning objective, the author should clarify:

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### Competence and training

- behaviour: what the person being trained will be able to do at the end of the course or session
- standard: the standard or level to which they will be able to do it
- condition: the situation or circumstances under which performance will be assessed

For example:

- deal with a customer complaint in accordance with the company policy, in a telephone role play
- create a flowchart to match the specified format, without using the manual

Clear, well written objectives will drive both the content of the training and the process and methodologies to be used. Outputs and outcomes can be measured. The same rules should apply when assessing the training process as to any other process within the management system.

### Proficient trainers

When auditing the training process, what consideration is given to the competence of the person doing the training? They must possess the necessary knowledge and skill not only in the subject they train in, but in adult learning approaches and how to effectively transfer learning. Because only 24 per cent of full time trainers in the UK have a certificate in training skills, how else are they to demonstrate competence? Furthermore, have they received training in - and/or recently updated - their generic training skills?

Research by the American Society for Training and Development concluded that less than 10 per cent of classroom-based learning results from subject matter content, and around 90 per cent from the trainer's generic skills. Effective initial training and regular updating of trainer skills would thus seem an essential prerequisite for anyone regularly involved in training others.

Despite this, a research study in June 2000 revealed that, out of the 600 training managers questioned, less than one trainer in ten had any personal development on generic training skills in the previous year. If this is true

for those for who train full time, what of those who deliver training far less often? Skills degrade without maintenance.

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### Competence and training

Poor trainers equal poor training. Poor training means deficient skills transfer. And the result is a disappointing return on training investment with lev

els of competence below those needed to consistently deliver satisfaction to the customer. Undoubtedly there is a need for corrective and/or preventative action. But so often organizations fail to get to the root cause of the problem and tend to blame other factors, including the learner.

#### Investing in the future

Better trainers deliver better training. A more competently trained workforce delivers increased productivity. Training becomes an investment, not an overhead. Where competence is at the heart of the QMS, the competence of those delivering training will be the key to sustaining organizational effectiveness.

#### About the author

**Stephen Russell is regional manager for the Training Foundation, which runs the trainer assessment programme (TAP). This programme provides a best practice methodology for the performance and objective assessment of six training and learner support roles against best practice models. For more information go to: [www.trainingfoundation.com](http://www.trainingfoundation.com)**

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### Internal auditing

**The internal audit is perhaps not the most popular aspect of the quality industry. Jim Wade of Advanced Training finds out why and examines the alternatives**

Internal auditing is the activity associated with ISO 9001 that used to be called internal quality auditing. Perhaps a few internal auditors love it. But, almost universally, other people in most organizations do not have it high on their list of favourite business mechanisms.

If you doubt that, observe carefully your colleagues' reactions when the subject of internal auditing comes up. Ask them what words or phrases they think of when the words 'internal audit' are mentioned. Ask them about the value (to them) of the activity. Note the flicker of unease on the faces of the managers of the areas being audited as you ask them about the business value of the non-conformities with which they are presented (and about the close-outs for which they know they will be asked).

Of course, many readers will suggest that these reactions stem from internal audits not being done well. They will argue that, if done correctly, we would see more positive responses. Perhaps they are right; internal audit practice - like everything else - varies.

#### Why do it?

Rather than asking how internal auditing can be done better, we should consider why we do it at all. Internal auditors are often trained on exactly the same courses as third-party auditors. As a result, many internal audits mimic third-party audit practices - checking that things were done the way they were supposed to be done, gathering objective evidence, reporting non-conformities by clause, and so on.

I do not have the space here to argue for or against the value of checking, often months after the event, what was done or not done. However, it is worth noting that, as well as receiving a negative response in organizations, conformity-focused internal audits have very little to do with what ISO 9001 requires.

The internal audit requirements (contained in ISO 9001 clause 8.2.2 with an important link to clause 7.1) translate in plain English to:

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### Internal auditing

- check the degree to which you have implemented the plans for your operating processes, specifically those that are to do with getting work, doing the work, delivering the results and getting paid
- check the degree to which you are meeting your objectives
- third requirement (newly introduced to internal audits by ISO 001:2000) is to check the degree of conformity with the requirements of ISO 9001 but, in comparison with the other two items, this is relatively unimportant

These checks are fundamental to the business, but is it not the job of management to carry out those checks as an integral part of the normal business cycle, not months later when an audit is scheduled?

#### No more internal audits?

ISO 9001 has a set of requirements (under the heading 'internal audit') that describe good basic management practice, but which do not fit into an 'audit-it-later' scenario. In practice, through training and habit, many internal audits put a heavy emphasis on what is being done despite the requirements making it clear that this is only a part of what is to be checked.

So many internal audits fail to meet the requirements of both the standard and the business. There is a general assumption that if an organization wants or needs to be certificated to ISO 9001, it must continue doing internal audits because the standard requires it. This is not true. There are UK-based organizations, with certificates from UKAS-accredited certification bodies, which have opted out of the need to employ auditors and which no longer conduct internal audits.

One FTSE 100 company uses a self-assessment approach to replace internal audits (despite the fact that ISO 9004 says that this is not feasible). The European subsidiary of a Japanese company makes sure that managers meet the internal audit requirements during the normal course of their work. Essentially, what is common about their approaches is that these organizations have studied clause 8.2.2 and have devised alternative ways, better suited to their business needs, to address its requirements.

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### Internal auditing

#### About the author

**Jim Wade is a director of Advanced Training and also runs the free membership Business Improvement Network ([www.bin.co.uk](http://www.bin.co.uk)). For more details contact t: 0118 987 5120, 07788 6666 08 or e: [jim.wade@a-t.co.uk](mailto:jim.wade@a-t.co.uk)**

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## Feature

### The IRCA interview

**In the first of a new series in which INform talks to IRCA director, Simon Feary, about the very latest issues in auditing and certification, we find out about ISO 17024**

#### **Q What effects do you think ISO 17024, the new personnel accreditation standard, will have on IRCA and on auditor certification in general?**

There has been a great deal of comment about this standard from those involved in auditor certification. Much discussion focuses on the necessity of a 'radical' change in the way we, the auditor certification bodies, operate. However, I'm not sure the word radical should be associated with this standard. We see the primary implications of ISO 17024 as being the removal of a mandatory requirement for training and an emphasis on an independent assessment of auditor competence and attributes. This is the interesting part of ISO 17024 and should present a fascinating challenge and potential opportunity.

Auditor competences have been defined recently in ISO 19011, as have the auditor attributes, so what remains for us is the challenge of determining how we assess an individual's competence and attributes. It should be done in a meaningful way that is sufficiently separate from training to remove any conflict of interest and be considered independent, and in a manner that is cost-effective and which must be cost-acceptable to all the stakeholder interests.

Some people within the industry are calling for a complete redesign of the certification model, which includes doing away with the specification and control of training courses and focusing only on the assessment or testing of auditor competence. I am not sure this radical redesign is necessary. I also have some fundamental concerns about its compatibility with what our customers require.

#### **Q So is IRCA suggesting no change at all?**

Before we get too focused on definitions and interpretations of ISO 17024, and how we are going to accommodate all this change, we should stand back, look at the big picture and ask ourselves some fundamental questions: Should IRCA change what it is currently doing? First, we should acknowledge and accept that our current practices provide a service that

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is valued by over 12,000 auditors and countless certification bodies. So a debate on whether we certify competence or certify qualifications or whether we are input based or output based is largely academic.

But we recognize that ISO 17024 has value and that it has prompted us again to look for more effective and independent ways to measure whether someone is competent to audit. But it may be fanciful to assume that we can devise a new, radical model for certifying auditors that is universally effective and at the same time is cost-acceptable.

We should also recognize that ISO 17024 is not designed specifically for accreditation of auditor certification. It is intended for all contexts of personnel certification from gas fitters to financial advisors, and we should accept that its application, under the strictest interpretations, might not be compatible with the limitations inherent within the highly subjective profession of auditing.

#### **Q Are you suggesting there may be a disparity between the requirements of ISO 17024 and what the market is prepared to pay for - and does that influence IRCA's approach?**

It means we must be careful. The current model has a strong emphasis on inputs. Our assumption has always been that by controlling the inputs we achieve the desired outcome, which is a competent auditor.

It is a model that has stood the test of time and although it may not be perfect, it is powerful. The key element in the current model is effective auditor training and examination. In recent years IRCA has put considerable effort into refining the learning methodology, and we continue to do this.

An example is our recently launched accelerated learning approach and our new flexible learning model. In terms of auditor examination, we remain the only training approval body to design and control centrally the examinations that students take after completing auditor courses as a test of their knowledge. This indicates that we give higher priority to the integrity and quality of the examination than other training approval bodies. But we recognize there is more we can do to examine competence, and ISO 17024 does require us to put more emphasis on this aspect.

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One reaction to ISO 17024 which does alarm us is the enthusiasm of some to rush into discarding input based competence assessment and instead adopting a model that relies on a single examination of competence with no controls on the training process and any other prerequisite inputs.

Like many theories, the 'examination only' approach may sound good on paper, but IRCA is far from being convinced that this will deliver the benefits to warrant the costs and disruption which will inevitably accompany changes to current practices. We believe there remains a strong argument for retaining a control over the training process for two reasons.

We work with ISO 19011 which advocates a number of prerequisites including training, education, work experience and audit experience, and these parameters should remain a part of any new or revised programme.

Second, maintaining training course certification allows us to manage risk effectively. Putting controls only at the examination stage of the process is very high risk. If the controls are not sufficiently robust then the entire process is vulnerable to negligence and abuse and we will end up certifying incompetence. In our view, it is very important that consumers maintain confidence in the integrity of the output of the auditor certification process and we do this by retaining control over auditor training components.

So it is very unlikely that any changes we make as a result of ISO 17024 will include doing away with our current practice of approving training organizations and certifying the presentation of their courses.

The one element we do need to consider is how we make any examination of competence independent of training as required by ISO 17024. Whether we will be able to convince our accreditation bodies that what we currently do is indeed to measure competences is still not determined. We won't expect a major shift away from certifying courses, but I would be surprised if IRCA would consider developing a programme that met ISO 17024, but would not pursue accreditation.

In any serious consideration of accreditation we need to be clear about what our primary role as an auditor certification body is. Is it to be accredited, or is it to provide a service that meets the needs of the certification and conformity assessment industry? IRCA has always been clear that if the two are not compatible, then accreditation comes a distant second. Let me emphasize that we do see value in auditor certification being included

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within the accreditation umbrella, and hope that the accreditation bodies which, in the past, have been lukewarm about auditor certification, think likewise and are inclined to interpret the application and implementation of ISO 17024 in a constructive and realistic manner.

Accredited certification as an industry is facing some stiff challenges. Reasons for not working together, which are rooted in history and ideology, only serve to distract all of us from achieving the very worthwhile objectives of adding value to business and industry and challenging the perception that accredited certification has had its day.

I am pleased to say that our initial discussions with UKAS have been promising and I look forward to working with them to review our certification model: first, against the demands business and industry makes on our services, and second, against the requirements of ISO 17024.

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## Feature

### Surviving an audit

**The success of an audit depends on how well both parties prepare for the event, and how well they interact at all stages of the audit process. Certification bodies devote time and effort to training their auditors but, surprisingly, there is little available in the way of corresponding advice for quality managers. Ivan Waples redresses the balance**

#### First steps

When you are first advised about the impending audit, ask the certification body for full details about the proposed auditors – who they are, whom they work for, their qualifications and suitability for the audit. Communicate this information to your senior and middle managers for their comments. (They may know something that you don't!) If any potential conflict of interest is identified, raise this immediately with the certification body.

#### Prepare your system

Do a thorough document and process review to ensure that your system addresses all of the relevant requirements of the standard. Ensure that all the relevant documentation is controlled, up-to-date, and accessible to the people who use it.

Check the status of your internal audit programme. Arrange internal audits of the more important procedures and processes. Commence corrective action on any non-conformities discovered.

Arrange audits of all important management systems and technical records. Ensure that these are up-to-date, complete and readily accessible.

#### Prepare your people

Advise all of your people of the impending audit. Brief them on how it will be conducted and what will be expected of them by the auditors. Brief them on how to respond to the auditors. Assure them of your total support and encourage them to approach the audit confidently.

Ensure that they are familiar with the documentation and records that relate to their activities, and that they can readily access these.

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Ensure that you and your 'quality related' managers are thoroughly familiar with the requirements of the standard. You should all aim to know the standard as well as the auditors do!

#### Prepare for the team

Think ahead about what will be needed by the audit team:

Provide the audit team leader with clear directions on how to get to the organization, where to go when they arrive, and how to make contact with you. If the auditors will be travelling by car, do what you can to provide them with parking. If they are flying in from another city or country, offer to collect them at the airport.

Alert the audit team leader to any special site entry requirements, and be ready to provide the team with any personal protective equipment needed during their visit.

Set aside an office for their exclusive use as a team room for the duration of their visit.

Make arrangements to provide the auditors with a light on-site lunch (if this is acceptable in the culture and permitted by the certification body). Also make arrangements to provide refreshments (tea/coffee/water) during the opening meeting and the auditors' final team meeting.

Arrange for a room to be available for the opening and closing meetings with sufficient seating for everyone likely to be in attendance.

A day or two before the audit, tidy up the workplace areas but do not overdo it – it should look like a working organization. During this time, again reassure your people of your full support, respond to any concerns they have, and make certain that they are ready. (Spread the word: 'If there are deficiencies in our system, it's better for the auditors to find them rather than our customers!')

#### On the day

The key issue will be the relationship that you establish with the auditors:

As far as possible, maintain normal work patterns, but remove any avoidable distractions.

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### Surviving an audit

Provide senior people as guides for members of the audit team. Ensure that the guides understand that their role will be to facilitate the audit, not dominate it. They will be observers of what the auditors are discovering, and they should take detailed notes of the auditors' findings. They should periodically report to you on the progress of the audit, and immediately alert you if anything serious develops.

Approach the audit as a co-operative venture, not a confrontation. Treat the auditors with respect, but not with subservience. Avoid arguments and confrontation. Do not try any tricks, such as wasting time or distracting the auditors.

### Discussing the findings

Maintain the relationship that you have established earlier.

Remember that the audit is an opportunity to inject fresh ideas into your organization. Be receptive to any ideas or suggestions that the auditors offer for improving your system or processes.

Listen non-defensively to any concerns that the auditors raise. Discuss the issues calmly and objectively. Ask the auditors to provide details of the evidence on which they are basing their findings, and exercise your right to respond to their concerns.

If you disagree with a finding, don't argue with the auditors - ask them to relate the issue back to the relevant requirement in the standard. If the auditors are merely expressing vague concerns, ask them to crystallize these concerns ('What exactly are you concerned about?'). Remember that findings of an audit should be based on the requirements of the standard, not the personal opinion of an auditor.

Before the audit team leaves the organization, ensure that there is a common understanding between yourselves and the auditors on which items will be reported as mandatory actions and those that are merely recommendations or suggestions.

Don't ever try to falsify your records in the hope of covering up deficiencies. Experienced auditors are not easily fooled, and the consequences of detection will be disastrous to the whole outcome of the audit.

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#### The best conclusion

Believe it or not, an audit can be just as stressful and mentally demanding for the auditors as it is for the auditees. Everything, therefore, that you do to prepare your organization for the audit and anticipate the needs of the auditors will be appreciated by them and will reflect positively on their impression of your management skills.

Some of these suggestions relate directly to the technical preparedness of your system. Others are concerned with establishing the right relation

ship between yourselves and the auditors. Still others are simply matters of professional courtesy and common sense. All of them, however, reflect a professional approach that should go quite some way to achieving the best possible outcome to the audit of your QMS.

#### About the author

**Ivan Waples recently retired after 27 years with the National Association of Testing Authorities Australia (NATA). During this time, he participated in nearly 500 laboratory assessments and ISO 9000 audits. At the time of his retirement, he was an IRCA-registered lead auditor and the principal presenter of NATA's QMS lead auditor training course.**

**Although now officially retired, he is still actively conducting training courses in assessments of laboratories and audits of management systems. He can be contacted at [ivanwaples@iprimus.com.au](mailto:ivanwaples@iprimus.com.au)**

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### A quality conference centre

**As Scotland's leading conference venue, the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) knows that providing a quality service for its customers and fulfilling business objectives is vital. Nonetheless it is unusual for a conference centre to choose integrated management, explains Hans Rissman, chief executive at EICC**

Since opening its doors in 1995 the conference centre has established a reputation for professionalism, excellence and quality on a global scale. Positioned in the centre of a city rich with history, culture and heritage, the purpose-built structure is designed to give maximum flexibility for all types of occasions.

Although registered as a limited company, EICC was established using public funds and the City of Edinburgh Council remains the main stakeholder. EICC operates in the service sector and describes itself as an event management service and facility.

#### Big achiever

For EICC the quality process started in 1994, when the first operation team members were recruited. The excellence model was highlighted to them as an improvement approach through an MBA (student programme) at Edinburgh University, and the Scottish Enterprise Glasgow (Govan Initiative).

As a result, EICC was the first conference centre in the world to achieve certification to ISO 9001 and the first to be IIP accredited. In 2000, the conference centre was also certificated to its industry standard, hospitality assured meetings, which covers the ten areas of its operation and is used by over 1,500 venues. To date, the EICC remains the highest scoring venue in its industry.

#### The excellence experience

As the winner of the Quality Scotland Service Award in 2001 and a three-time EFQM European Quality Award finalist, the EICC has underpinned its entire operation, strategy and culture with the philosophy of the excellence model.

The excellence model was first introduced to senior managers who used it in their business-planning process and as a result won the Lothian Business Excellence Award. Excellence is compulsory for team leaders but op

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### A quality conference centre

tional for all other interested parties. Training is also very important and courses for excellence model training are constantly on the agenda. The plan is to increase the number of trained assessors by 2006. The excellence model is now totally integrated into the business-planning process and continually improving the EFQM score is a major business objective for EICC. The only real barrier that has been experienced is the occasional difficulty in getting staff involvement. This is overcome through coaching and training.

The excellence model is not the only tool used to achieve the centre's aim for excellence. External recognition has been given for ISO 9001, ISO 14001, IIP, excellence through people, hospitality assured meeting, and the green tourism business scheme. Various aspects of other quality initiatives have been utilized, including the balanced scorecard, quality circles, process management, 360-degree appraisals and cross-functional teams.

#### The environmental team

EICC believes its quest for excellence is exemplified by its commitment to six different quality standards covering all aspects of its operation. This process has revealed a number of trends that have enhanced the centre's operation. One of the key areas of business planning and development that has grown considerably over the last few years relates to environmental issues.

A cross-functional team was set up to investigate ways in which key objectives such as waste minimization, reduced energy and water consumption and alternative transportation could be met. Since this time, energy savings of over £50,000 have been made. In addition, paper savings of more than 50 per cent - and a 25 per cent reduction in waste per event - are just a few of the immediate benefits.

#### The future

The vision of the EICC is that by 2005, it will be recognized as a centre of service excellence and will always be one step ahead of client expectations. EICC is in the business of not simply running events, but of ensuring successful events. Since its opening, the centre has moved from a broad customer base to one that is more highly targeted. In serving this focused customer base, EICC has concentrated on providing a consistently high standard of bespoke service to its customers.

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### A quality conference centre

#### About the author

**Hans Rissman is CEO of the EICC. He is chair of IIP Scotland and the Hospitality Industry Trust bursary committee.**

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### IATCA chairman resigns

The International Auditor Training and Certification Association (IATCA) chairman, Michael Carmody, announced his resignation from both the chair and the IATCA board in April.

Carmody, CEO of the Quality Society of Australia (QSA), has been involved in two controversial issues during his time at IATCA: the management of the multilateral agreement (MLA) peer evaluation process and the complaint against QSA's certification practices.

Although Cindy Miller of the Registrar Accreditation Board takes interim control as the vice chair, she has indicated she has no desire to lead the board formally. The chair is elected by the members so any decision is certain to be deferred until members next meet at the plenary scheduled for September in Singapore.

We will keep readers informed of further developments.

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### IRCA welcomes new OEA

A new signatory to IRCA's organizations employing auditors (OEA) programme has been announced. Moody United Certification Limited is a China-registered subsidiary of the Moody International Group, and is one of the few foreign equity joint venture certification bodies approved and licensed by China State Administration of Accreditation and Certification. Moody runs management system certification and training services in China, including:

- ISO 9000
- ISO 14000
- OHSAS 18000
- QS 9000/ISO-TS 16949
- HACCP

Moody International has developed management system training and certification services since the early 1990s, which have been accredited by primary national and international accreditation bodies. Moody International Certification Ltd is authorized by IRCA to provide lead auditor and internal auditor training services.

For more information on IRCA's OEA programme go to [www.irca.org/employers/employers.html](http://www.irca.org/employers/employers.html)

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#### ISO 14001 revision

Final publication of the ISO 14001:2004 EMS standard looks set to take place in December 2004.

The revision aims to clarify definitions and objectives in the text of the standard. Furthermore, in light of the ISO 9000 revisions, it was decided that both ISO 14001 and ISO 14004 needed to be made more compatible with the ISO 9000:2000 series. To remain consistent with the revisions of ISO 14001, the ISO 14004 text was also clarified.

The preparation of the final draft international standard (FDIS) will take about three more months, and should be published at the beginning of September 2004. The FDIS vote should be completed by mid-November and, if there are no important changes, ISO 14001:2004 will be published before the end of December 2004.

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### Change to IRCA's training model

June sees the introduction of IRCA's new model for auditor training. This marks a substantial move away from the five-day classroom formula that IRCA established 20 years ago and which has become the industry norm. The new approach features two innovations:

#### Accelerated learning

The new course syllabus focuses on student-centred learning rather than lecture-based tutor input, and encourages auditor training course providers to design learning that allows students to discover knowledge - such as the requirements of a standard - for themselves. The dull days of listening to lectures about ISO 9001 are yielding to task-based courses that help students understand new concepts more profoundly and retain the knowledge for much longer.

#### Flexible learning

Training providers will now be able to provide auditor training courses in part-time formats and in blended learning formats. IRCA has divided courses into knowledge and skills. 'Blended learning' simply means that students complete the knowledge elements outside the classroom through self-study, e-learning, correspondence courses etc, and apply the skills elements in the classroom.

Many training providers are developing interactive electronic learning formats that will allow busy professionals to complete knowledge elements in their own time and at their own pace. This has implications for employers, who are often reluctant to release staff for five consecutive days, and for students, who can spend more or less time on the areas they need to work on as appropriate.

IRCA anticipates that it will take 18 months to officially convert all courses to the new accelerated learning approach but Vincent Desmond, IRCA's business manager, believes that the first blended learning courses will be available this year.

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#### Open space gathering

An open space gathering, hosted by BSI, was held in June to update auditors about new findings and ideas about internal auditing. The agenda was dictated by the participants, and much of the day was devoted to wide-ranging discussions such as integrated audits and whether audit reports can be used for business performance improvement.

The new ideas had been driven by a group representing Orange, O2, Vodafone, Kingston Communications, Siemens Business Services, Pitney Bowes and BSI, which has been looking at ideas for improving internal auditing, particularly in ISO 9001-certified situations. The members of the group believe that the conventional methods and approaches of internal auditing are of limited value and effectiveness. They have investigated - and are at various stages of implementing - a range of alternative approaches.

Joce Grant, quality and customer services manager at tesa UK Ltd attended the gathering: 'It was a refreshing change to see such an open and receptive attitude from many quarters of quality. What was very encouraging about the day was that there were no closed minds, and even the subjects were chosen democratically.

As delegates, we were asked what we wanted as topics - quite an unusual approach. Also refreshing to know was that most people in the quality profession are questioning the relevance of audits now that ISO 9001:2000 has moved on dramatically, focusing more on measurement and continuous improvement. It was comforting to know that I was not alone in thinking the art of auditing has been neglected compared to the standard itself. When the question "do we need audits?" is asked, you really know times are changing.'

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### IRCA introduces new auditor logos

A new benefit for IRCA auditors was announced in May: the auditor logo. This new set of auditor logos has been produced for auditors to use on their business cards, stationery, websites, publicity material and presentations.

The logos are available on the secure area of the IRCA website which can only be accessed by IRCA auditors with a password. IRCA has provided a logo for each of its auditor programmes: QMS, EMS, OHS, ISMS and food safety. Each logo is produced in a variety of colours and formats to suit printing, website design etc.

'We anticipate that this will help employers and clients identify auditors who have achieved IRCA's international certification and thereby ensure that they are using the services of an auditing professional who can really add value,' says Simon Feary, director of IRCA.

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### New international sign standard

A new ISO standard which clarifies the understanding and proper application of safety signs has been formulated to reduce accidents in workplaces and public areas worldwide.

The standard is called ISO 7010:2003, and it will help to communicate safety information through a collection of signs designed for use in any workplace, location and sector where safety-related questions may be posed. Conventor of the working group that developed the standard, Paul Bischof, said that ISO 7010 acts as a 'red line' for the safe installation of safety signs.

Bischof continued: 'ISO 7010 sets out to guarantee that, anywhere in the world, a manufacturer of safety signs for workplaces and public areas uses exactly the same pattern. The standard seeks, moreover, to give guidance to the designers of safety signs and get them to use ISO 7010 with a view to obtaining greater overall consistency and thereby better universal recognition.'

The standard covers 32 safety signs for accident prevention, fire protection and emergency evacuation. Each is displayed by a visual illustration with the image content, function, field and format of application. ISO 7010 is to be used by ISO technical committees who develop safety signs for their industry, and should prevent the duplication of signs for each safety meaning.

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## Questions & Answers

### **INform answers some common queries about continuing professional development (CPD)**

**Q IRCA requires auditors to complete 45 hours of CPD, but I find this very difficult. I am not sure what subjects I should be studying.**

CPD is a framework that encourages you to continuously update your professional knowledge, skills and competencies to make you more effective and to make the auditing profession more credible. The value that CPD contributes is recognized throughout all professions. IRCA's role is not to spoon-feed auditors CPD, but to work to identify CPD areas and to provide auditors with information on these topics.

A good example of this is IRCA's work with the IAG (ISO 9001 Advisory Group) auditing practice subgroup, which has identified a whole range of areas in which auditors can usefully improve. We have then communicated these aspects to our auditors, including the advice documents that the group has produced.

INform is running a series of articles exploring these aspects and we would encourage certification bodies (registrars) in general and IRCA OEAs in particular to include these topics as key elements of their ongoing programme of development for auditors.

**Q Why did IRCA decide on 45 hours as the requirement for CPD?**

CPD is a framework that encourages you to continuously update your professional knowledge, skills and competencies to make you more effective and to make the auditing profession more credible. The value that CPD contributes is recognized throughout all professions. IRCA's role is not to spoon-feed auditors CPD, but to work to identify CPD areas and to provide auditors with information on these topics.

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### Questions & Answers

INform is running a series of articles exploring these aspects and we would encourage certification bodies (registrars) in general and IRCA OEAs in particular to include these topics as key elements of their ongoing programme of development for auditors.

#### **Q Does IRCA offer CPD courses? If so, where can I find out about them?**

IRCA does not certify or recognize CPD courses at the moment, but there is a range of industry journals, conference events and training courses available. However, IRCA recently ran short auditor conferences in Japan, Korea and Thailand that have proved very successful - it is considering expanding this initiative.

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## Feedback: open letters

**The letters below are open for discussion and the INform team invites comments, answers and further questions either relating to these letters or posing new topics. Make yourself heard and send us your feedback**

### Auditing undocumented processes

I read the first issue of the new e-zine with interest. In his article 'The benefits of ISO 9001:2000', Dave Powley implies that a process cannot be audited unless it is 'put into the audit arena' by being presented in the form of a procedure.

I am extremely surprised to read this. I thought the whole idea was to allow companies the freedom to control processes more creatively. Is he saying that he cannot audit undocumented processes or that no one can? Admittedly, it's easier on the auditor to audit the 'say what you do and do what you say' type of system, but it certainly isn't true that a process has to be documented before you can determine that it is controlled. I have been teaching auditors to do just that for the past two years.

Chris Gowens  
QMS 2000 principal auditor, UK

### The author's response

Chris Gowens is correct in his belief that organizations should be given the freedom to control their processes more creatively - I wish there were more people with the same mind-set. He is also right in his contention that procedures and descriptions of them help the auditor, or more correctly, help the audit process. It is worth noting that an audit, or at least a management system audit, is a systematic evaluation of the adequacy of and compliance with planned arrangements.

I would like to draw attention to the 'compliance with' part of that statement. In effect, this means a 'comparison' – in this case a comparison between 'what is' with 'what should be'. If these planned arrangements are not described in some form, it is very difficult to enable that comparison. It certainly is possible to audit an organization where an employee population cannot refer to a prescription or a described process or flow diagram or even a procedure, if you will. However, the audit is likely to be fraught with misunderstanding as well as taking an undue length of time.

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Imagine the case of an auditor who wants to audit compliance in cases where there is no description of processes. He would first ask a representative employee (A) to describe by 'word of mouth' how the activity being audited should be conducted. He clearly cannot then interview employee A as the audit subject in order to check compliance. He must then find other employees (B, C, D etc) who conduct the same activity. In doing this the auditor is likely to get interview responses that, even in the best scenario, would be an array of variations on the same theme and, in the worst case, outright contradiction or disagreements between the audit subjects.

This would be a manifestation of the classical 'communication line loss', in management consultant speak. Also, it is not hard to imagine how much time this would take. Furthermore, process descriptions should not be underestimated in their role as training aids or devices to assist consistency of operation, if consistency is an issue.

Finally, I am all in favour of the removal of burden in management systems, and there are several ways of doing this. However, I would suggest that descriptions of processes should be one of the last items on the 'spring-clean' list.

David Powley  
IMS principal lead auditor, DNV Certification, UK

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If you have any comments, ideas, requests or constructive criticism let us know. Please contact IRCA INform by emailing:

e-mail: [aholgate@iqa.org](mailto:aholgate@iqa.org)

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We look forward to hearing from you...

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