APPLICATION OF ISO-9000 FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

KAMAL NARAYAN JHA
Ms. VEENA MISHRA
B N SINHA
R&D Centre for Iron & Steel
Steel Authority of India Ltd.
Ranchi-834 002

The implementation of ISO 9000 standards are the means to improve product quality. The application of a quality assurance system in an organisation is seen as a close-loop control system which deploys policy and strategy and obtains feedback from various levels in order to improve the performance of the services. Reflects on the benefits derived and costs involved in implementation of ISO 9000 system in an organisation.

INTRODUCTION

The information era has led to the concept of the global village. Information has become central to almost all human activity and is the key to scientific, technological, industrial, economic and political developments [1]. A sea change has taken place in all spheres of our lives where information has become the most powerful tool that keeps us updated and is necessary for modern existence.

In the commercial and corporate environment, information is recognized as one of the most valuable assets, if not the critical one. In this changing scenario, library and information services (LIS) have to adapt to the new paradigm. In the process of adaptation, in all services and production units, a good Quality Assurance System plays an essential and important role in gearing up the company to provide customer satisfaction.

WHAT IS QUALITY?

Quality is defined as "the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs" [2]. A Quality Policy is needed because it speaks of the management's intention, commitment and direction regarding quality. In most cases, it spells out clauses and the procedures that are to be followed to implement quality to fix systems and responsibility for each and every activity.

Quality is important because it assists in a company's effort to meet the expectations of the customer. To maintain quality consistently and for continuous improvement, Quality System standards which are provided in the ISO-9000 series are applicable in business and industry. Within the competitive economic environment, it is necessary to satisfy not only the overt or stated requirements of the customer, but also the implied needs. This is what leads to customer delight, loyalty, and long association which are seen in an improved and growing market share.

ISO-9000 ORIGIN

ISO stands for the International Organization for Standardization or International Standards Organization [3] and the ISO-9000 is a series of standards for quality systems devised to help companies establish effective quality assurance systems. The ISO-9000 certification is a mark of conformity that the organization's quality assurance system complies with the specific and relevant ISO-9000 standards.

This series was introduced in 1987 by the ISO in Geneva and revised in 1994. This series consists of a set of documents, some providing standard guidelines, and some the actual standards which can be used to develop the quality system. There are five standards in the ISO-9000 series - ISO-9000 to ISO-9004. Appropriate ISO-9000 standards can be selected for implementation, depending upon the nature of operation in an organization.
The Indian Standard IS-14000 is the equivalent standard to ISO-9000. For running a business within India, IS-14000 is enough, but presently, it is not recognized outside India. ISO-9000 is recognized universally and building a quality management system based on the ISO-9000 series is the single biggest step in ensuring a "strong foundation for future business success".

The ISO-9000 certificate is given by a certifying body, an impartial organization either governmental or non-governmental, possessing the necessary competence and reliability to operate a certification system. The receiving or supplying organization must meet the specified requirements of the relevant ISO-9000. The certificate is like a driving license and, therefore, has a validity period which is presently three years, after which recertification is required.

**ASPECTS OF QUALITY SYSTEMS**

A good quality system ensures consistency of products and services and guarantees the utilization of i) the same materials, ii) the same equipment, and iii) the same methods or procedures every time in the same way.

The Quality System requires that the following norms be observed:
- define each activity;
- set the appropriate procedure for the activity;
- document that procedure; and
- act as per the written procedure.

Thus, a good Quality System makes sure that
- quality is a part of every activity and
- quality is everyone's responsibility.

In practical terms, the documented procedures ensure that the set activities will be conducted in the same way which lead to consistency of products or services. They also involve in the process all the operators concerned with that activity and thereby assure that the level of quality maintenance is the responsibility of everyone. In library and information centres, one can readily see how this could affect routine activities such as, cataloguing and classification, etc. and translate them into effective and speedy functioning.

**STRUCTURE OF ISO-9000**

The four standards in the ISO-9000 series are
shown below and the appropriate ISO standard can be selected for implementation, depending on the nature of operation of an organization.

The section of the ISO-9000 series which is most relevant to the library and information services is the element 4.5 of ISO-9001, which is meant for Document and Data control which covers [2]:

- Updating of national and international standards;
- Review and approval of different quality systems documents;
- Availability of the latest issues; and
- removal of obsolete documents.

The philosophy of the Quality Assurance system is that Quality is the hallmark of every operation. Customers are the focus of everything we do. Quality means meeting the requirements of the customer without error first time and every time [4]. Hence, all the activities are written down and work is accomplished according to the written procedures.

QUALITY PROCEDURE

Each procedure has the following facets:

- Title of the procedure;
- Purpose;
- Area of application;
- Definitions, abbreviations and symbols used;
- Responsibility for the procedure;
- Procedure details;
- List of records maintained; and
- Circulation list of the controlled copies.

The procedures are prepared by persons involved in a specific activity and each procedure is signed by reviewing and approving authorities. Each procedure has a unique document number and date from which it is effective. The procedures in a library and information centre, depending on the size and variety of services offered, would at least cover acquisition of books, journals and other documents, technical processing or cataloguing/classification of documents, reference or information services, translation services, etc.

ELEMENTS OF ISO-9001

In ISO-9001 which is the most comprehensive in terms of coverage, there are 20 clauses that need documentation and implementation [2]:

i) Management responsibility;
ii) Quality system;
iii) Contract review;
iv) Design control;
v) Document and control;
vi) Purchasing;
vii) Control of customer supplied products;
viii) Product Identification and traceability;
ix) Process control;
x) Inspection and testing;
xii) Control of inspection measuring and test equipment;
xiii) Inspection and test status;
xiv) Control of non-conforming products;
xv) Corrective and preventive action;
xvi) Handling storage and packaging;
xvii) Control of quality records;
xviii) Internal quality audits;
ix) Training;
dx) Servicing;
xx) Statistical techniques [2].

Each organization works out methodologies and procedures which must satisfy all these elements.

CERTIFICATION METHODOLOGY AND COST INVOLVED

For the purpose of certification, the quality system is examined, inspected and approved by an accreditation agency. The different stages involved in ISO certification are shown in Fig. 1.

The cost involved for acquiring an ISO-9001 certification varies depending on the type and size of the organization and the certifying body. Given below is a rough break-up of cost for an organization with about 1000 employees.

| Training of internal auditors | Rs. 3,000 for each auditor |
| Certification fee charged by certifying body | Rs. 2,00,000 for first 3 years |
| Surveillance audit fee charged by certifying body | Rs. 22,000 for each time |
Cost of certification could, therefore, be calculated as follows:

Total cost for 70 auditors

\[ 70 \times Rs.3,000 = Rs. 2,10,000 \]

Total cost for 2 surveillance audits each year

\[ 2 \times Rs.22,000 = Rs. 44,000 \]

Certification fee, valid for 3 years

Rs. 2,00,000

**Total amount**  Rs. 4,54,000

In addition, there are other costs such as, travel and other allowances for the auditors, costs of internal awareness programmes for employees, costs of infrastructural support and the preparations for the certification within the organization, depending on the time required, etc. After the first three years, the certification has to be renewed and the charges for renewal, internal audit and surveillance audit are to be calculated.

---

**Fig. 1 Certification Methodology**
APPLICATION OF ISO-9000 FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

BENEFITS FROM ISO-9000 CERTIFICATION

Several benefits-tangible and intangible, accrue in obtaining the ISO-9000 certification. The principal of these have to do with confidence in an organization instilled in its current and potential customers. The advantages may be seen as:

- Credibility of the organization goes up;
- Better access to global markets;
- Cost reduction results through eliminating waste, reworking and redundancy;
- Boosting personnel morale by involvement of every employee from top to the bottom;
- Once an organization gets a certificate, its quality system ensures consistency in quality of its output which, in turn, increases customer confidence;
- Internal, external and surveillance audits are part of the quality system and are conducted periodically which help in preventing deterioration and in enhancing quality further;
- Manpower is used more effectively following procedure-task orientation;
- Training new personnel and redeployment of persons to new tasks are also easier; and
- Documented procedures are developed by the concerned persons and thus have a higher acceptability. This leads to improved efficiency, raises employee morale and results in effective communication.

However, the benefits of the system must be seen with relation to the high cost of obtaining the certification and it is, thus, more useful for commercial organizations and institutions. The certificate establishes a standard of operation and quality consciousness which is globally recognized.

CONCLUSION

The process of acquiring an ISO-9000 certification itself contributes to improving quality in the functioning of an organization. In documenting procedures and operating practices, the organization can streamline various activities and get rid of redundant practices. The preparation of quality and procedure manuals and access to these make the functioning of the organization more transparent and enhance communication. For corporate library and information centres at least, the adoption of the certification process makes for more effective working with services and output which are truly relevant to their users.

REFERENCES


