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ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group Guidance on:

Top management

Recognizing that the auditing of top management is a sensitive issue, this document provides guidance for this category of auditing.

Auditors should involve top management in the audit, i.e. invite them to opening and closing meetings, allow sufficient time in the audit plan for interviewing top managers, discuss audit findings directly with them, seek evidence of their commitment, etc.. It is important to change the focus of attention from just the quality manager to the top management of the organization.

The auditor should consider top management activities to be processes, and should auditing them accordingly.

Planning stage

The auditor needs to identify top management processes, and

a) understand the organization and its management structure, by reviewing information such as organization charts, annual reports, business plans, company profiles, press releases, websites,

b) make provision on the audit plan for gathering relevant information regarding top management commitment, directly from and by interviewing top management,

c) understand the culture of the organization and its top management, in order to determine its impact on the audit plan – and make appropriate adjustments.

d) take a professional approach in the auditor's own appearance, by determining the dress code of the organization.

e) plan the timing of the top management interview, to ensure convenience and punctuality.

As far as practical it is recommended to assign an auditor with appropriate auditing and decision making experience to interview top management,

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Conducting the audit

Common methods of evaluating top management commitment are:

1. Interviews with top management

The auditor can, by utilising business terminology appropriate for the top management, ask relevant questions that

a) seek to obtain evidence of top management commitment to quality and its relevance to the organization's overall objectives and management system,

b) establish evidence of conformity to the ISO 9001 requirements.

c) if the organisation decides not to retain the Management Representative position (as was required by earlier editions of ISO 9001, prior to the 2015 edition), the auditor should give special consideration to the allocation of the responsibilities and authorities which historically were associated with this role.

2. Collecting and confirming evidence

The auditor/audit team should be constantly looking for opportunities to confirm the answers received from top management when interviewed.

This includes

a) the availability and relevance of policies and objectives

b) the establishment of linkage between the policies and objectives

c) obtaining the evidence that these policies and objectives are effective and understood throughout the organization

d) determining if the policies and objectives are appropriate for continual improvement of the quality management system and for the achievement of customer satisfaction.

e) determining if top management are involved in management reviews.

Additional interviewing and gathering of evidence may be needed to provide the necessary corroboration.

The audit team should ensure that any additional evidence of top management commitment is also collected.

The auditor/audit team should review the collected evidence, to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the information, and to provide confidence in the conclusions drawn.

Audit reporting

Auditors should prepare their audit reports in order to make them appropriate for presentation to the top management of organizations. It may be appropriate to present an executive summary of the audit report, suitable for presentation to the top management and

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key interested parties of the organization. The executive summary should highlight the key findings, both positive and negative, and identify opportunities for improvement.

For further information on the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: *Introduction to the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group*

Feedback from users will be used by the *ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group* to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address: charles.corrie@bsigroup.com .

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