PERRY JOHNSON REGISTRARS, INC.

9 Pitfalls To Avoid When Managing Your QMS

Developing a quality management system (QMS) and pursuing ISO 9001 certification for the very first time can be a daunting prospect – but by avoiding these pitfalls, the initial process can be made that much easier!

1. Overly complex system. If your staff is struggling and putting more effort into maintaining the system than they are their "normal" everyday work tasks, it's a clear sign that the system is too complex. Documentation, forms, and other parts of the system are meant to *help* day-to-day business and add value – keep focus on results and improvement rather than the quantity of documents.

2. Lack of management commitment or buy-in. A QMS cannot function well without support and involvement from upper management. Whether that includes providing resources, empowering employees to improve products and processes, or offering control mechanisms, ISO 9001 cannot be maintained if those at the top are distant or unavailable.

3. Leaning on just one person. As with involving upper management, ISO 9001 likewise cannot be "dumped" on just one person; it is a *systemic* certification that must be interwoven into the entirety of a business.

4. Rushing. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to an ISO 9001 management system, and rushing ahead with a disorganized or underdeveloped scheme in mind will only lead to frustration. The best QMS is one developed with effort and feedback over a broad timespan.

5. Copying other systems. As mentioned in #4, what works for one company may not suit another – even those producing similar goods or providing the same type of service. Each company's culture and structure is unique and has its own strengths; build around that specific context for best results.

6. Lack of training. While buy-in and ownership of the system is crucial throughout the company, how can team members properly understand or appreciate the QMS if they aren't sure how it works? Having a robust training program tailored to the responsibilities and processes in each department or role is key.

7. Lack of customer awareness. Given that one of ISO 9001's main goals is improving customer satisfaction, a lack of understanding customers' wants and needs may lead to "improvements" that have minimal – or even worse – negative impacts. Asking the right questions and maintaining a strong rapport with your clientele is crucial.

8. Improper corrective action. While complex, the corrective action process is a cornerstone of ISO 9001. Using it improperly, or only picking and choosing which aspects to use, can create persistent, frustrating loops of ongoing issues.

9. Choosing the wrong internal auditor. Experience is the name of the game when it comes to monitoring a QMS. Ensuring that the chosen auditor is both well-trained and seasoned in your industry will make sure they know which issues to focus on.