

10 rules for getting ISO 9001

Internationally renowned health, safety, environmental and quality expert

Phil Chambers gives his top ten tips for becoming ISO 9001 certified

What is ISO 9001 and how do we become certified?

ISO 9001 is a QA management standard. Note that it is management standard, not a performance standard. It is not a just matter of doing the right thing; it is also how you approach that in an auditable, sustainable and improving way.

There are two steps to gaining certification:

- **Setting up and implementing management systems to cover the clauses in the ISO 9001 standard.**

- **Being audited by a UKAS-accredited certification body. This requires initial certification visits and then repeat visits to maintain certification.**

10 rules to follow

1. Be concise. You are not being judged on your weight of documentation, just that it covers the relevant ISO 9001 clauses and how well it is implemented.
2. Follow the philosophy: "Say what you do and do what you say." It is pointless having an ideal system if the reality is different.
3. Write your documentation from the perspective of its users. Avoid having it look like semi-legal documents.
4. Use flowcharts wherever possible. A couple of pages of flowcharts are far more understandable than multiple pages of text and are just as acceptable to the certification body.
5. Avoid as much as possible having additional requirements whose function is only to satisfy the 9001 system. Some may be necessary, but keep these to a minimum.
6. Avoid multiple data recording as much as possible. Don't have lots of forms and spreadsheets.
7. Make sure you get benefits other than the certification itself. Done properly, you can reap financial benefits.
8. Use the data you gather on customer feedback to analyse how you can improve the relationships.
9. Be wary of customer satisfaction surveys; very rarely will people give you meaningful feedback.
10. Shop around for a certification body; some charge more than others.