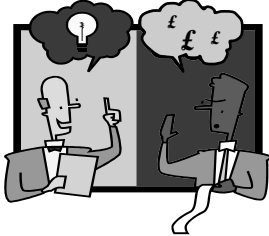




Internal Auditing—Turning negatives into positives

Most people view auditing as a negative experience. You might expect this of managers and staff who are auditees, but it is surprising how many internal auditors see their role as being someone who is looking for fault.

Our research shows there are a number of key reasons why auditing is seen in a negative light:



1. The focus is on compliance with existing documented procedures. This reinforces the view that the aim of the audit is to “catch people doing something wrong”.
2. A high proportion of nonconformities raised result in corrections rather than corrective action. This generates quick fixes, involving as few people as possible, and resulting in similar problems occurring at subsequent audits.
3. Not enough managers are auditors. Auditing is seen by managers as being an activity which is a poor investment of their valuable time.

The first two issues are relatively easy to resolve, the third is a little more difficult, and is in reality, dependent upon the success achieved with the other issues.

Getting the right balance



Internal audits are aimed at improving the effectiveness of the management system. Compliance with existing procedures is a minimum requirement of effectiveness, and should be seen as such. Internal auditing, and auditors, should focus more attention on process effectiveness and improvement. Internal

audits should produce at least twice as many opportunities for improvement as nonconformities to dispel the idea that auditing is “finding fault”.

Corrective action is essential

In the real world if problems occur they have to be fixed, in most cases immediately. These actions are rarely addressing the root cause of the problems. But it is important that corrective actions are taken to prevent recurrence of the problem, and there are many learning points to be gained from solving problems.

Management involvement

If managers see the emphasis on improving the performance they may want to be involved as an auditor, or at the very least they will fulfil their role as auditees in a more effective and enthusiastic manner.

A perfect nonconformity report

The most common faults found on nonconformity reports are:

- the failure to explain the requirement
- a weak and ambiguous statement of the evidence
- inability to link the evidence with the requirement

Explaining the requirement

- if the requirement relates to a lengthy clause of the standard select the appropriate words, paraphrase if necessary in your own words, providing the meaning has not changed
- if the requirement relates to your own management system be precise as to the exact element of the management system, process, procedure, etc. A procedure number alone will not do
- always include a reference number of the clause of the standard or the management systems reference number

Recording the evidence

- always state the actual evidence, avoid summary evidence such as ‘a sample of records were inaccurate’
- never use the phrase ‘there was insufficient evidence’
- keep to the facts, do not make assumption e.g. ‘the statistical information was difficult to understand and would therefore be of little use’
- does the evidence show proof of nonconformity against the recorded requirement?

The ultimate test

It should be possible for anyone in the organisation to comprehend a nonconformity report without having to resort to a string of supplementary questions in order to understand the report. If you have to ask what, how, when, etc. then the report is incomplete and ineffective.

Auditing Courses from Batalas (An IRCA & IEMA Approved Training Organisation)

ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, ISO/TS 16949, AS 9100, ISO 13485

For a full list of courses and public event schedule please visit our web site - www.batalas.co.uk