



Certification body—just another supplier

In our discussions with clients Batalas consultants and tutors are quite often surprised by the relationship between certification body auditors and some clients.

These relationships range from extremely cosy to deferential. At the cosy end of the spectrum auditors have failed to identify significant issues which should have prevented registration.

At the other end of the spectrum auditors offer their own interpretation on how an organisation should meet a requirement, sometimes to the detriment of good working practice.

The cosy relationship may suit many organisations who can do without too much challenge. But if this relationship means that your management system is not effective as a result, then this represents a great deal of wasted effort and money.

The worst kind of relationship is one where the certification body is held in awe by the organisation. If this is combined with poor auditing skills and judgement the result can be a management system which has been designed for effective auditing first and foremost.

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This is not a criticism of the certification body fraternity; in fact many of the certification bodies have made strenuous efforts to remove under-performing auditors. But the truth is that, just like any business, there are excellent auditors, some poor examples, and a fairly large proportion who are doing nothing more than 'going through the motions'.

The best approach is to treat your certification body as you would any other supplier:

- If you are not happy with your auditor request that s/he is changed. If you are still not satisfied then employ another certification body.
- If you believe that you are being misled, or being asked to do something which adds no value, challenge the auditor. If you are not given a satisfactory answer take the issue up with the certification body.

Just remember

- the international standards are based upon good practice and therefore, it is to your benefit to comply
- how you meet the requirements is for you to decide and not the auditor
- it is in all our interests that the good auditors/certification bodies prosper and we can only do this but refusing to accept poor performance
- if your auditor is being lax with you the same could be happening with your suppliers. What will be value of certification if everyone accepted this attitude?

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Note

The comments contained in this article relate to UKAS (or other IAF accredited) certification bodies. With reference to certification bodies which guarantee certification within 30 days, or other such short periods, we view this as dubious practice, with these certificates not being officially recognised by UK government departments and many major commercial organisations.



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