

The next stages in the evolution of ISO 9001

The latest version of ISO 9001 was released two years ago (2008) with very minor changes to the requirements. This is in contrast to the he previous version of the standard (released in 2000) which resulted in significant changes including the introduction of an entirely new concept of a process approach. At QPRC we wanted to know what to expect from the next stages in the evolution of the requirements of ISO 9001, and invited [Dr. Gary Cort](#) who currently chairs [ISO Technical Committee 176](#) to answer our questions:

QPRC: When ISO 9001 will be updated again?



Dr. Cort: If the past is any guide, then we should expect a six to eight year update cycle, which would have the next revision coming on line around 2015. While many of us in ISO Technical Committee 176 believe that we could reduce this time by half (at least), to do so will require fundamentally restructuring the standards writing process, which is completely serial today. Imagine separating the standards writing process into design (i.e. deciding what the content of a revision will be) and development (the iterative process implementing the design, i.e. creating the standards documents, circulating for comments, balloting, etc.). This would allow one team to complete the development of the current revision while another team simultaneously works on the design of the next revision.

QPRC: What are the major trends in the development of ISO 9001 quality management systems?

Dr. Cort: To date there have only been two substantive versions of ISO 9001 – the original 1994 standard and the year 2000 revision – so it is not really reasonable to talk about trends. But there are many proposals, each of which enjoys its own constituency within the Technical Committee and throughout the international community.

There are strong arguments for keeping ISO 9001 essentially unchanged as a minimal entry-level quality management system. Others believe it should be continually updated to reflect state of the art quality thinking. There are champions for specific additions, such as addressing risk management or resource management. Many think the architecture of the standard needs a fundamental overhaul, perhaps incorporating a maturity

model or providing mechanisms for leveraging other standards from the ISO family or beyond.

We have also begun a campaign to create an ISO 9000 ecosystem—a dynamic, user-focused environment to sustain and invigorate the ISO 9000 family of standards, make our products more robust and easy to use, and propel them into new application domains, adapting as they go. We are populating the ecosystem with downloadable tools, templates, examples, case studies, decision trees, metrics, and reference material—practical information to help users apply our standards successfully in the real world.

QPRC: Can we anticipate that the sustainability notion reflected by ISO 9004:2009 guidelines will affect the next revision(s) of ISO 9001?

Dr. Cort: Sustainability is a bedrock concept across ISO today. Our mantra is “International Standards for a Sustainable World.” So we will certainly see the notions of sustainability included more explicitly in ISO 9001 and the other 16 standards that comprise the ISO 9000 family. It is my opinion, however, that the ISO 9000 family of standards is already innately compatible with the ideas of sustainability and sustained success. Using them as is can provide a powerful framework for sustainable operations.

QPRC: Do you envision possible connections between “to be released” ISO 26000 and the next revision(s) of ISO 9001?

Dr. Cort: While I don’t anticipate any direct references between the two standards, I firmly believe that the greatest opportunities for the ISO 9000 family of standards lie at the intersection of quality and society. I am immensely proud to report that ISO 9001 has already had some very important (and highly successful) forays into the world of social responsibility. Through International Workshop Agreements (IWAs), ISO 9001 has been used as the basis for international standards for Reliable Local Governments (IWA-4) and Secondary Education (IWA-2). It is also the basis for the landmark legislation in Colombia that requires registered quality management systems for public institutions. Furthermore, the Republic of Panama has become the first nation in the world to register its national Electoral Tribunal against ISO 9001, and there is a growing movement to develop an ISO-9001-based international standard for electoral bodies.

QPRC: Are there any specific actions that you would recommend for the users of ISO 9001 to take to be better prepared for the evolution of ISO 9001?

Dr. Cort: The best way to prepare for the evolution of the ISO 9000 family is to become part of it. More than ever we need to understand your concerns and needs. But even more than that we need your contributions to

build a dynamic ISO 9000 ecosystem that delivers on the value proposition of our standards. If you have a useful tool or implementation system, we would love to make it available through our ecosystem. If you can share case studies, lessons learned, hints and tricks, example implementations, or anything else that can help unlock the potential of the ISO 9000 family – there is a world of users and potential users who hunger for this information. Get involved, showcase your knowledge and results, and help make the world a better place.

QPRC: Can the user of ISO 9001 as an individual or as a company provide feedback and/or recommend some changes to the standard?

Dr. Cort: ISO standards are drafted (principally) by technical committees comprised of representatives of the international community of nations. ISO Technical Committee 176 is one such committee and is responsible for the 17 international standards that comprise the ISO 9000 family. The national standards bodies of the participating countries – more than 80 in our case – provide our membership. These are the people who actually write the standards.

In order to do this job effectively, however, we need lots of input from the public. We are able to gather some of this input through formal instruments like surveys, but these just scratch the surface. We desperately need comments, criticisms and suggestions from business and society in general.

In today's fast-moving business world, communication is more important than ever for establishing expectations and setting priorities. Help us create a high bandwidth channel for collecting your crucial input.

QPRC: Thank you very much, Dr. Cort.

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