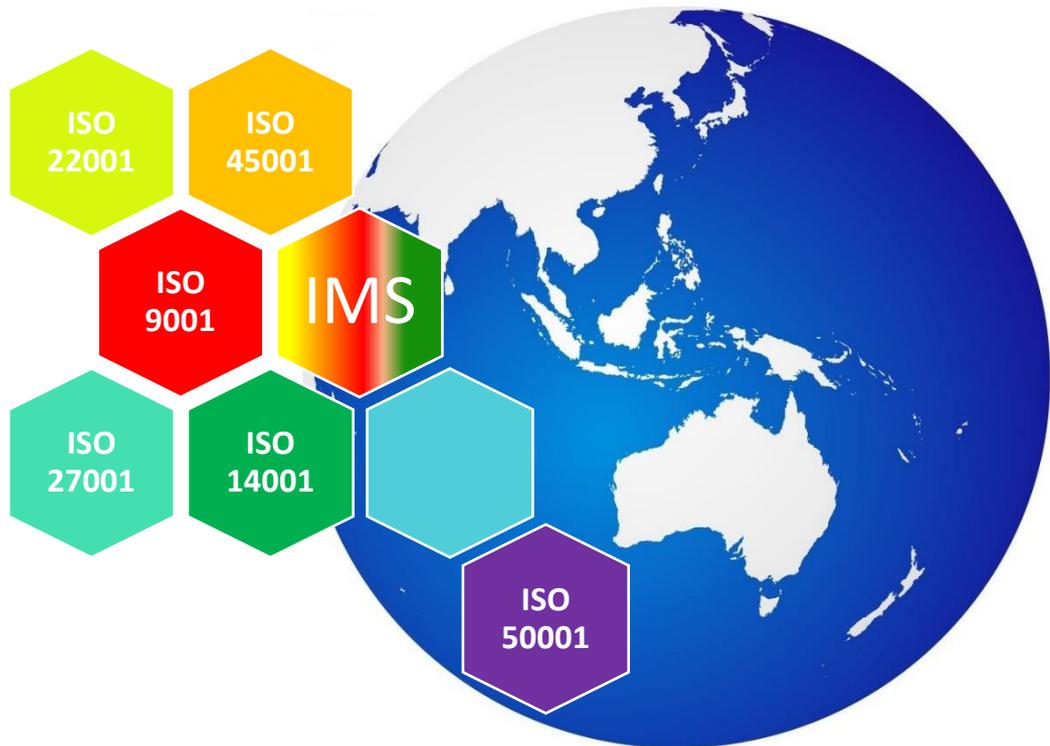


Is your certified management system working for you?



It is obvious that there are so many ISO management systems (MS) that are certified around the world. Here is a link to a recent published article '[An overview of 2018 ISO management systems certification - Survey Results](#)' published on 17 September 2019. My article graphically illustrated the worldwide active certification status of the twelve ISO management systems using the 2018 survey results originally published by the *International Organisation for Standardization (ISO)*.

In this article, I put forth the views and opinions based on the observations and findings that gives the reader an understanding to a certified management systems effectivity. I have taken two extreme situations where an organisation sees their management system is productive, effective and works for them. On the other end, organisations whose MS certification is ineffective and has ongoing issues, concerns that affect their processes, productivity, their investment and more.

Before a review and insight of these two extreme ends of Management Systems in organisations around us, I wish to give an overview of

1. Overview of International Organisation for Standardization (ISO)
2. Overview of Standards Australia
3. Introduction to the ISO management systems
4. ISO Management System insight

1. Brief overview and introduction of ISO



[International Organisation for Standardization \(ISO\)](#) is an international body who publish various standards with HQ in Geneva, Switzerland. ISO is an independent and a non-governmental organisation who have published **22792** International Standards covering almost all aspects of technology and manufacturing. ISO have members representing from 164 countries and 780 technical committees and subcommittees to take care of standards development. ISO does not perform certification nor issue any certificates.

Source reference: International Organisation for Standardization (September 2019).

2. Brief overview and introduction of Standards Australia



[Standards Australia](#) is the representative member of the ISO. Standards Australia is the country's leading independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit standards organisation and International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). Standards Australia roles are

- Standards development
- International participation
- Accreditation of standards development organisations

Source reference: Standards Australia (September 2019).

3. Introduction to the ISO Management Systems

There are various management systems standards that are published by ISO and the mother of all management systems standard is the ISO 9001. This quality management system standard (ISO 9001:2015) is the platform to all other management systems. ISO 9001 is suitable for organisations of all types, sizes and sectors.

The current and recently published management systems standard has the same overall structure as ISO9001 management system standards ([High-Level Structure](#)), making it easier for anyone using multiple

management systems. The Annex SL of ISO/IEC Directives Part 1 (the rules for developing ISO standards) is used as the basis for the high-level structure for any MS standards.

The most popular [management systems standards](#) are available through ISO and/or [Standards Australia](#).

These standards are fundamentally designed to give organisation the basis to develop a framework and achieve certification that is internationally recognised, systemise the processes, bring in transparency, discipline and more importantly creates efficiencies to improve customer satisfaction. There are other several benefits that helps organisation including marketing their products and services. It is an excellent way to demonstrate capabilities and commitment to your clients, society, environment, security and beyond.

4. ISO Management System insight



This article gives an insight to the quality management system (ISO9001) being the most popular among the other MS. The ISO Management Systems has evolved over the years. For those organisation that worked with the 1987 versions of ISO 9001, ISO 9002, ISO 9003 would realise how far we have come. The 1987 standards were so rigid, dictating, no flexibility, didn't suit all industries, yet organisation had no options but just conform to maintain their certification. Thanks to ISO, their members and the technical committee and all global contributors who have come up with the best and effective ISO 9001:2015 management systems that suits all forms, types and sizes of industries around.

The ISO 9001:2015 management system gives the organisation the flexibility to develop their own business model/framework to suit their business processes. This requirements in the standard along with legal and regulatory and organisation determined requirements enables to create the framework that delivers quality products and services. Certainly, it makes good business sense to have organisation certified to the ISO 9001:2015 and enjoy the benefits of this MS standard. Isn't that a great news?

I have evaluated the effectivity of the organisations' certified management systems. The observations, findings are reviewed to give the reader an understanding of the certified management systems. Also, a status of an organisation if it has gained benefits from certification including productivity, effectivity and if it's really working for them or not.

The article lists the potential reasonings of an effective and ineffective certified management system. If your organisation needs improvements, you may review the applicable findings and observations and review with a workable solutions to rise back from your potential pitfalls, issues, concerns or problems.

4.1. General observation in an effective organisation

In general, most businesses and organisation these days have a clear vision and missions to achieve their set objectives. Success follows provided these organisations are effectively supported by their leaders and employees. It is challenging, and it does matter on several factors including the size, type, location, competitors, technology, systems and processes but more importantly, inspirational leaders and active team at all levels. Having effective leadership team in an organisation can execute their plans and strategies to engage their employees to achieve the desired outcomes with increased and sustainable results.

Many organisation these day have eliminated the word '**Quality**' in their management system (QMS) and replaced with '**Business**' Management System (BMS). It really makes sense. A big kudos to the management and their leadership team. Why? Because, these leaders have realised, developed, implemented and certified their BMS framework using the appropriate MS standard to suit their business model, protocols and their objectives.

They also realised that the implemented ISO management systems and processes is everyone's business. Every function and process leaders have taken the ownership of their processes and fine-tuned their systems and processes to meet ISO-MS standards requirements. Simple as that. This is one of the hidden formula for the sustenance of their ISO programs.

With this model/framework and the top management commitment along with their leadership team have made a big difference in their business processes and to achieve the desired outcomes. It isn't an easy task, but organisation have managed to lead and grow with it.

Every organisation has tough business challenges but to keep their business work effectively, organisation need to maintain processes and systems. Some of the challenges may include e.g. business uncertainties, process/safety/system/product and service risks, stakeholders and clients demand, ensure IP protection, maintain safety and security, safety of employees, equipment/products and the environment including social and political challenges. These challenges/topics require organisation to identify and implement appropriate solutions using the requirements of the applicable MS standard.

These are the most common business issues and concerns in every businesses, and it is up to the organisation to develop and strategically run their businesses. The Management System standard requires organisation to use Risk Management to evaluate and implement solutions to maintain their systems, processes, products and services. If done rightly, organisation maintain a sustained and certified management systems. This is possible when organisations are committed, supported and continually improved their MS systems.

Some of the key reasons of an effective management systems are

- 📍 Top management commitment and support
- 📍 Leadership (individuals and team)
- 📍 Learning organisation (at all levels)
- 📍 Listen to people, take advices and recommendations
- 📍 Encourage and support continuous improvements
- 📍 Perform ongoing reviews and improvements
- 📍 Evaluate and improve performance and pitfalls
- 📍 Risk management implemented
- 📍 Share knowledge, develop and empower individuals; and more

4.2. What are the realities of organisation who struggle?

The reality is, not all businesses outshine to that level of excellence overnight. Apart from all the good intentions, organisation do struggle with issues, concerns and problems. So, organisation management need to identify, focus, improve, support and invest in aspects like (in no specific order and are generic)

- 🔴 Management commitment and continued support
- 🔴 Lead by example
- 🔴 Inspiring and dedicated leaders
- 🔴 Allocate process ownership
- 🔴 Encourage proactiveness culture
- 🔴 Support, allocate and maintain required resources
- 🔴 Listen to the experts and specialists
- 🔴 Create a culture to improve by having criticism from experts and advisers (good and positive things are vital too)
- 🔴 Recognise individual's contribution (doesn't matter big or small)
- 🔴 Build relationship of trust and support
- 🔴 Provide tools and resources to investigate issues and concerns
- 🔴 Motivate personnel at all levels
- 🔴 Communicate change management
- 🔴 Invest and provide training to all employees e.g. skills development, resource materials etc.
- 🔴 Improve process and business transparency
- 🔴 And much more

Having systemic issues, deficiencies to support and allocate the basic needs identified above could affect organisation growth, profitability, create low morale, develop toxic environment, hinder product and service quality, process inconsistencies, low market profile and more. The ongoing and current issues and concerns or problems could be avoided by ***having managers developed as leaders***. The management and the leadership team could be the reason for the downfall of a certified management system.

Organisation needs effective leaders. These leaders need to work effectively with their stakeholders to motivate and contribute. Their simple leadership change can make a significant difference in the systems and processes of their organisation BMS.

How? These leaders must develop cohesive team who could identify the gaps and the potential causes of their BMS system and process failures and/or pitfalls. Through their inspiration and management commitment, it is possible to transform and maintain an effective certified management system.

4.3. Why isn't your management system working?

If a management system is rightly developed with proper assessments with consideration of identifying gaps, understanding organisation needs, size, geographical locations (applies to multiple locations), business plans, products and services, new developments, business structures etc., organisation are very likely to have a simple, transparent and a robust management system that works effectively.

However, organisation whose management system isn't working, it is very likely that they have one or more of these following issues, concerns, pitfalls, risks as listed below i.e. (in no specific order)

1. Management system was not fully understood by the top management and the leadership team
2. Top management team were not briefed or introduced to the management system (half knowledge)
3. Systems and processes were developed in a rush to seek certification urgently
4. Organisation have had no clue of the certification and management process. Their primary objective was to achieve certification quickly for commercial gain only
5. Organisation lacked support to maintain systems and processes (no firm commitment)
6. Certification intent wasn't clear. Initial support and high priority to achieve MS certification but later priorities, support and commitment diluted (low focus and priority)
7. Management thinks/assumes the entire certification and maintenance is Quality Manager's job
8. Operation leaders do not support the implementation (lack support)
9. Reactive approach across organisation. No proactiveness
10. Assumes that a MS is a paperwork system (incorrect)
11. Management system is not implemented to suit business model
12. Internal issues e.g. Lack support and commitment, unclear roles, internal politics etc.
13. Implemented system is complex and paper driven system (not regarded as a process oriented)
14. Systems and processes not followed/observed (bypass requirements, taking short-cuts etc.)
15. Processes are not effectively reviewed nor improved
16. Duplication of documentation
17. Lacks transparency and process ownership
18. Professional and experts' recommendations are neglected/ignored (why waste hiring them?)
19. Fabricated contents and materials to suit circumstances (would create more problems)
20. Ineffective risk management of system, process, products, services, facility, safety, security...
21. Root causes are not identified but solutions implemented based on assumptions
22. Priority changes and consequently the MS topics and issues are forgotten
23. Processes may mature but supporting documentation falls behind
24. Change management is ineffective
25. Supplier processes is ineffective
26. Management and staff may have no formalised job/position description (JD/PD)
27. Personnel overloaded with tasks (missing JD/PD)
28. Employees are scared, have a low morale, lack motivation, no recognition...
29. Reactive approach to safety and security topics
30. Process owners fix issues just before audits/assessments
31. Informal process reviews
32. Employee training and development is ineffective
33. Lack of product and services knowledge, information and understanding

34. Legal and regulatory requirements are limited or unknown
35. Customer specific requirements, technical details, project/product/service requirements aren't clear or unknown
36. Ongoing product and process changes are informal and/or unknown
37. Minimum and/or no system back-ups
38. Contingency plan isn't evident for processes, equipment, management and staff, supplier chain, contractors, management systems...
39. Records are not maintained and/or inconsistent and/or informal
40. No consultation in decision making (management, leaders, managers...)
41. Business and process leaders have no authority but are accountable
42. Conflict of interest
43. Quality leader and team reports to operation leader (independent evaluation fails) – Org. structure
44. Position description covers only job specific requirements
45. Clash between leaders and managers affect performance
46. Managers are bonus and incentive focussed
47. Ineffective solutions implemented for system and process deviation, nonconformity/noncompliance
48. Problem-solving process is ineffective (root causes are not identified using proper problem-solving tools, methods and techniques)
49. Personnel are not trained in management systems, tools and methods, techniques...
50. Corporate and divisional bureaucracy. Rigid requirements that adds no value at local levels
51. Employee retention is ineffective (no back-ups)
52. Customer complaints are informal and ineffective
53. Informal change management. Personnel responsible for their processes are unaware of changes e.g. Related to systems and processes, product and services, equipment, modification, documentation, safety information, legal and regulatory, customer requirements...
54. Little and/or no effective communication at all levels (system, process, project, product, service, general topics)
55. Safety and security issues are informal and attended at ad hoc
56. We passed external assessment. So, don't worry about internal checks, audits, reviews etc. (Remember that external assessments are sampled. No escape at all surveillance audits. Don't hold Quality Manager responsible for organisation negligence. It would be too late when a major nonconformity and/or noncompliance is identified internally and/or product recall happens that affect organisation reputation and/or when severe noncompliance due to safety/environmental impacts are identified)
57. Some managers take credit for other peoples' achievement (they are not leaders). Blame on others when there are failures
58. ...

The above items are the weaknesses, observations, findings and the realities of an ineffective organisation, who struggle with their certified management system.

4.4. What should be the initial change to make your Management Systems work for you?

Firstly, the management needs to take accountability and responsibilities of commitment. Assure to have future leaders developed or hired. Ensure their leadership team have positive attitude, take process ownership, contribute to the success of the organisation goals and objectives, be an effective leader to lead a team and work on attributes that would take the organisation to the next level. This must be the prime objective as a team. Management and leadership team to set clear and transparent plans that works. Be realistic on organisations' wants and needs. Prioritise action plan that would work through organisations' ongoing and new issues.

Listed below are some of the tips that generally fits most organisation and they are not in any particular order

- 🔴 Top management and the leaders MUST utilise and support their experts and professionals
- 🔴 Stop bureaucracy and internal politics
- 🔴 Work as a team, seek and share ideas, encourage openness...
- 🔴 Listen to your people and welcome their expert advice/recommendation (believe in your people)
- 🔴 Be a learning organisation (lessons learnt from projects, process, stakeholders, business pitfalls, mistakes etc.)
- 🔴 Do not underestimate the strengths and hidden talents of your staff
- 🔴 Respect and acknowledge even the worst suggestions (you need to encourage, empower and recognise contributions)
- 🔴 Give feedbacks to employees and stakeholders (positive and areas that needs improvement)
- 🔴 Develop, implement, train/coach teams and individuals in business systems and processes
- 🔴 Support innovation and creativity
- 🔴 Have regular reviews, checks and tests of the business processes
- 🔴 Communicate regularly at all levels
- 🔴 Support and allocate resources including moral support
- 🔴 Encourage and create an environment of continuous improvements
- 🔴 Work by facts and figures not assumptions (where possible)
- 🔴 Give opportunity to grow and develop

Secondly, the management **must** realise that implementing and certifying to a specific ISO scheme is **not a one-off project**. It needs to be done right first time, maintained and continually improved. Organisation who are still struggling through their management systems need to contact their external independent experts locally. *If you want assistance from [QPro Australia](#), we would be more than happy to be your partner and help to resolve your issues and/or attend your needs. Our services are only going to better your existing circumstance and improve for the best.*

4.5. How could your organisation overcome these issues and make them work for you?

The possible options vary depending on the size of the organisation, history of the concerns, any applicable points listed at section 4.3. There could also be new problems and/or an organisation may require a fresh start to improve and build the statuses. Whatever may be the decision, it is the organisation who must

determine what suits the best and to regain assurance of confidence in the management system that would support and add value to their business processes, growth, competency, productivity, profitability and more.

Below are the recommended options to consider and take it as a first step towards business improvements.

a. Options:

- O1. Your external third-party could be employed and exercised to perform the same tasks of assessment at a prime cost but they cannot help you to resolve issues, problems and findings with a process to identify the potential root causes nor can they recommend any solutions.
- O2. Seek your internal management systems leader e.g. Quality Manager to perform a study in partnership with an external consultant (reliable). An external consultant and expert can put forth an independent report and let the organisation Quality Manager exercise and determine the root causes and solutions. This may workout cheaper, but verification and independency should be warranted.
- O3. Get an expert or professional to revisit your situation. Depending on the size of your organisation, number of locations, underlying issues and problems, the expert can perform a thorough study with facts and figures, identify the potential root causes and recommend solutions that would require the management and leadership team to review and consider prior to implementing the changes.
You may employ any reliable professionals you wish too. [QPro Australia](#) can also assist and perform an independent assessment of your organisation activities, issues, concerns and develop an action plan to get all the identified issues closed and help to resurrect your organisation to be the leaders in your profession.
- O4. It is hard to contemplate and generalise one box solutions to the weaknesses, findings, issues, concerns, pitfalls, risks as listed at section 4.3.

In summary, the effectivity, success and the reputation of an organisation can be improved, if the organisation is willing to change their mindset, build leaders, be proactive, reassure commitment, support transformation and continual improvements. Organisation who learn from their failures and mistakes are generally committed to improve their statuses. So, nothing to lose. In fact, they know the best ways to lead and set an industry norm in a competitive environment of today's business world.

Applying these simple changes and practices in an organisation can result in a profitable business that not only support continued growth, improve processes, increase productivity, eliminate wastes, sustain quality, develops a culture of improvements, keep customers happy and would certainly establish confidence to assure that products and services are delivered to the requirements. These small and simple changes would transform worst to good; and good to best practices, which is the most effective way to grow and remain competitive in the market.

Thanks to our reader for allowing me to share the journey of organisations, whose certified management systems have effectively worked and to others, I hope that the tips, recommendations and advices may assist to improve and rebuilt their image and brand.



b. Additional information and recommendation:

- Seek help from QPro Australia for the services you require. We can tailor simpler, transparent and effective solutions to suit your business needs. QPro Australia can also take on the ISO maintenance program to suit your needs. Our professional services have helped organisation that required to
 - a. Seek new opportunities and qualify to attain new long-term businesses
 - b. Rectify ongoing issues and support in rationalising complex processes
 - c. Have independent audits performed to your scope and needs
 - d. Perform independent second party audits of organisation facility | suppliers | contractors
 - e. Assess project from start to finish
 - f. Develop and support organisation in implementing the MS
 - g. Select the certification body of your choice (JAS-ANZ accredited body (CAB/Registrar/CB)
 - h. Perform pre-audit prior to an external audit (third-party audit)
 - i. Integrate business systems of an acquired business into parent company
 - j. Ongoing maintenance of the ISO program
 - k. Tailored training programs for organisation at all levels
 - l. Coach, train and prep organisation for the second- and third-party audits
 - m. Tailored framework for
 - i. Legal and regulatory programs
 - ii. Customer specific requirements
 - iii. Change management
 - iv. Problem solving process
 - v. Correction and corrective action process
 - vi. Integrated management systems (IMS)
 - vii. Document and records management systems (DRMS)
 - viii. Process mapping
 - ix. Business process model
 - x. Integrating and rationalising document structure, project folders etc.
 - xi. Training matrix

- For further queries and information

