

Insight aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Work Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

A 'How To' for Management Review

Management Review is one of the best explained and worst applied sections of the management system suite of International Standards (ISO9001:2015, ISO45001:2018, ISO14001:2015).

As simply stated in Clause 9.3 "top management shall review the organisation's quality / safety / environmental system...to ensure its ongoing suitability, adequacy effectiveness..." The respective Standards list the items that should be considered (inputs) and the type of actions and decisions that should result (outputs).

Located under *Performance Evaluation*, Clause 9.3, simply put, requires the leaders of an organisation to take time out at planned intervals, usually annually, and to sit back and consider is our quality / safety / environmental management system effective? Is it delivering results?

In view of the answers to those questions, 'top management' is prompted to then consider how the system can be improved and whether there is a need to increase resources to do so.

Common issues QRMC has found with the Management Review process when we undertake audits include:

1. "Normal" monthly management meetings are passed off as management review;
2. Top management are not present; and
3. The prescribed inputs are not considered.



Addressing issue 1: Standard management meetings do not count as a Management Review, generally because top management are not always present and the list of items in Clause 9.3 is not discussed. These meetings are generally focussed on ongoing operations and day-to-day problems, rather than the annual "sit back and reflect" session that is the Management Review. Some businesses hold quarterly Management Review Meetings, which are attended by top management. This is acceptable, providing that over the course of a year, all items detailed in Cl 9.3 have been considered.

Addressing issue 2: A common area of confusion is what constitutes 'top management'? In smaller companies this is generally an obvious choice, but becomes harder in larger, decentralised organisations. A rule of thumb is that it's a level of management higher than the site / facility manager. Another mechanism to identify 'top management' in an organisation is to consider their duties in respect to the organisational roles, responsibilities and authorities that are listed under Clause 5.3.

Addressing issue 3: The simplest way to ensure that all required inputs are considered at the Management Review meeting is to use the points in Clause 9.3, as agenda items for the meeting.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

Virtual Auditing

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged a great many tried-and-(no longer)-true systems of work. One of these is conducting external or third party audits, which have typically involved physical site inspections and face-to-face interviews.

The ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group provide direction in relation to remote auditing, and the most recently issued guidance (ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group on Remote Audits, Edition 1 2020-04-16) on the subject actually cites the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the variety of reasons why an auditor may not be present on the site to complete an audit. This guidance recognises that current ICT

tools (such as Zoom, MS Teams etc.) have made remote auditing a feasible option.

Given current circumstances in which social distancing and other restrictions are compulsory, auditing remotely presents a viable and more cost-effective option.

Naturally, there are pros and cons attached to this approach. Below we explore these for each of the fundamental components of the audit process.

Audit Entry / Exit Meetings – This is probably the least impacted component of an audit. Using commonly available on-line meeting tools, audit entry and exit meetings can work well, even including the sharing of documents or presentations.

Document Review – Again this component of an audit works well remotely, presenting a cost-effective alternative to getting everyone together in the same place to review documents that can easily be shared electronically.

Conducting interviews / discussions – This component works reasonably well in a remote format, although there is a loss of direct interaction with the workplace and getting a feel for the environment in which the auditee operates. Also, the ability to observe the reactions from several auditees in a room at the same time is weaker.

Site Inspections – this is probably the area most impacted by the use of virtual audits:

- From an auditee's perspective there is more control – it presents an opportunity to better control the auditor from exploring or spotting red flags, as without being physically present the auditor can't go off track in a messy corner of the workshop, or flick through the SDS folder past the one good example that was formally presented.
- From an auditor's perspective the lack of an on-site presence has the potential to impact on their understanding of the organisation's operations as a whole, and there is limited opportunity for free-reign exploration as detailed in the above point.



It should also be noted that virtual auditing is not without its inherent risks, most predominantly the risk of technology failure especially in more remote areas. Further, the virtual nature can stymie personal interactions and hinder the building of relationships (and potentially trust) between auditor and auditees.

Remote audits are more straight forward in organisations that use the technology on a day-to-day basis not only for meetings but also for internal remote site inspections as part of their assurance functions. If auditees are used to conducting Zoom or MS Teams as part of their normal business interactions, then conducting a remote audit is an easier transition.

Whether virtual or remote auditing becomes the new norm remains to be seen, however given current constraints from the COVID-19 pandemic are with us for the foreseeable future it is important not to put off audits indefinitely. As detailed above, there are pros and cons and some issues to manage, however with some planning and testing remote auditing is viable for many operations.

Having completed a number of this style of audit, QRMC is happy to share our thoughts as to how best plan for an effective audit process. Please [contact us](#) for more information.