

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.

Does your Management System need to go on a diet?

This month we're picking up the discussion from [last month's *Insight*](#), in which QRMC suggested that Management Systems are often 'obese': fattened by verbose language, cut'n'pastes from legislation or codes of practices, and layers of documents that appear to be oblivious to the fact that the end-user worker does not have the time to read what is being offered.

From the experience of auditing over 100 organisations' management systems over the years, QRMC's auditors have identified a range of commonly experienced problems that stand-out as 'fattening agents' within a management system:

- **Document Architecture** – prescribing a document hierarchy whereby 'there shall be' a Policy for a specific issue, a corresponding Standard, and a Protocol before getting to a Procedural document that prescribes what's actually needed by the system's users, that is, how the specific issue is to be managed.
- **Document format/layout** – adopting a template that requires time to be spent detailing the Background, the Aim, the Purpose, Scope, Rationale, Definitions, Responsibilities and Accountabilities for everyone involved in the process, and further in the Review Process, Training Requirements, Audit Evidence and a page of Legislative References, with the actual requirements of the process lost in the mass of words.
- **The cut'n'paste approach** – the tendency to 'cut and paste' reams of detail from the Codes of Practice or legislation without interpreting what it means for your operations.
- **The choice of language** – all too often there is a disconnect between the document author and the end-user, with the author using language that doesn't resonate with the end-user. Australian

and international studies have shown that most safety communications aim too high for the average worker's English literacy level. The studies showed that common safety procedure terms like 'minimise', 'prohibit' and 'compliance' were identified as posing a challenge for over two thirds of employees, impacting on their ability to understand the safety message.



In all decisions around creating and reviewing a management system, the custodians, authors and auditors need to consider how the documentation will fit with the workforce, how easy it is to read and understand and how easy it will be to comply with.

Interestingly, Qantas recently used the introduction of ISO 45001 as an opportunity to overhaul their many Safety Management Systems and processes across the organisation. As a large national and international airline, Qantas must ensure its Management System complies with every Australian Commonwealth and State jurisdiction's requirement, the various international requirements as well as a series of interfacing CASA requirements. A major overhaul of the Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Management System was undertaken last year resulting in a more streamlined approach that now applies across Qantas's various business operations. It was established (for the most part) that the separate Business Operational Teams did not need their own WHS documents, and as a result, an overarching uniform framework was able to be

established that eliminated much of the duplication across the organisation.

Altogether the number of documents within the updated WHS Management System has been reduced by 30% (with further reductions potentially to come). Additionally, the process has tightened up the link between the WHS responsibilities of individuals and the Management System documentation, with the aim of making the system easier to comply with for end-users.

With the end-user in mind, document titles have been simplified with a move away from safety jargon (and a corresponding broadening of the search parameters within the online document management system), and there has actually been an increase in the related Document Templates, introduced with the aim of making life a little easier for users across the respective business operations.

Well done to the Qantas Team for the smart thinking that went into re-designing their Management System, and for applying ISO 45001, while keeping the end-user in mind.

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

How Ready Are You for Your Next Management System Audit?

Whether it be your Safety, Environmental, Quality, or Information Technology Management System, or a combination of these, preparing for an audit is a very important step for your organisation. An external audit from a third party (be it to achieve certification to a recognised Standard such as ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems or ISO 45001 Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems, or to maintain certification from a surveillance audit) requires a significant amount of preparation and planning.

This article is the first in a series designed to provide some useful background information and tips to assist your organisation in how to best prepare when audit time rolls around. (As a caveat, if a management system is embedded, mature and functioning optimally, the focus of the preparation should be akin to polishing an already clean car. The functioning of the management system itself is the preparation.)



At its most simple, the purpose of any management system audit is to achieve four things:

1. Determine whether your organisation has documented processes that meet the requirement(s) of the applicable Standard.
2. Interviews and discussions with workers and management to verify whether the processes are known and understood within the organisation.
3. Seek evidence that the processes are being followed by workers.
4. Provide feedback on whether the organisation's processes are effective at achieving the desired outcomes.

Before examining each of these steps in further detail, it is crucial to understand other inputs such as when the audit is scheduled and how much preparation time you have, how long it will take, and which workers (including management) are required to be involved.



Preparing your organisation for an audit takes time and effort. Not only do policies and procedures need to be developed, or reviewed and updated, they also need to be implemented, and any required training delivered.

There is a need to review the outcomes of the previous management system audit and any internal audits completed in the previous 12 months,

and ensure that any identified non-conformances have been actioned and are complete.

The organisation must conduct an internal audit. Not only is this a requirement of the ISO Standards, but it is also the best way to identify any system weaknesses that could become major non-conformances prior to the external audit. It is far better that these are identified and addressed in-house than be uncovered by the certification auditor. Internal audits are also a good way to prepare staff for the audit interview process.

The organisation must also conduct a formal management system review. Typically, this is an area where a lot of organisations struggle to grasp the requirements of the respective Standard. Quite simply, has top management (typified by your Executive Leadership Team for larger organisations), taken time to specifically look at the management system to ensure it is still suitable, adequate and effective for the needs of the organisation. Circumstances both within the organisation such as a major restructure or new ownership, and external to the organisation such as the current global Coronavirus pandemic, may have significantly impacted the way your management system is able to deliver its intended objectives suitably,

adequately or effectively. Remember how quickly we all needed to adapt to working from home and the logistics necessary to make this work? Your management system must suitably, adequately and effectively provide for these and other unusual circumstances.

Additionally, the management review process is a chance to reflect on whether the management system's objectives are still relevant and achievable. The Standard goes into greater detail as to the other items that need to be reviewed by top management on a regular basis, and if the organisation can demonstrate that top management has taken time out of their busy schedules and dedicated it to look specifically at the current and intended future state of its management system, this will go a long way in preparing for the audit. It also shows how serious the organisation takes its Quality, Safety and Environmental risks and opportunities.

Part 2 of "**How Ready Are You for Your Next Management System Audit**" will look at each of the four points mentioned above in greater detail and the steps and tips of preparing for a successful audit.

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