

# ISO CERTIFICATION: The facts and background

From Heather Nowak of Nova IT Solutions



Heather Nowak

For anyone who has ever considered trying to qualify for ISO (International Standard Office) certification on behalf of their business, the idea can be quite daunting. 'Who sets the standards?', 'what are the processes?', and 'what are the benefits?' are questions you might be asking.

British Standards (BS) have been established for some time - 1903 saw tramline sizes being reduced to save costs, and in 1927 the oldest British Standards Institute (BSI), BS 275 for Dimensions of Rivets, was devised. Today there are over 31,000 current standards with between 6,000 and 7,000 standards under development at any one time according to the British Standards Institute (BSI) which is the UK's National Standards Body. The BS ISO certifications cover European and International standards for all sizes and sectors of British companies. The ISO certification numbers relate to the type of certification that may be relevant to your business can vary.

So which ones might be relevant to you? The most popular standard in the world is the ISO 9001 used by over a million different companies in 78 countries. The BS EN ISO 9001:2008 certification is the Quality Management Systems ISO accreditation and is the latest version. This certification sets standards for documentation and management system control ensuring that you effectively manage your business and meet customer requirements to the standards that you specify.

The BS EN ISO 14001 is the second most popular global standard. This is the environmental management system accreditation for businesses and is used by over 220,000 businesses in over 159 countries. Certification includes setting an environmental policy for your business, together with a working environmental management system, conformances to objectives and legal requirements, and is compatible with the ISO 9001.

Both of these ISO standards are valuable assets to your company, so how do you start?

There are many companies offering ISO certification, but how many have the UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) kitemark? This is becoming an increasing requirement by public sectors on tender documents, and is proof that your company has

passed a certification to one of the highest standards. Nova IT Solutions Ltd are Chamber of Commerce members providing IT services and equipment within a highly competitive market. The directors decided to look at undertaking both the ISO 9001 and 14001 together with UKAS certification in mind.

Heather Nowak, Director Nova IT Solutions, cites the benefits of ISO in terms of - 'ensuring customers receive the best service possible, business improvement and market credibility. It was important for us to meet our environmental obligations to the conservation communities we support by setting measurable standards and writing a transparent environmental policy. ISO accreditations were also a huge step for us towards fulfilling "contract tendering" in the public sector'.

Chamber of Commerce members, Business Flow UK Limited were contacted. Their accredited consultant, Dave Hall, supplied Nova IT Solutions with an initial free review and identified areas for improvement based on existing codes of practice and new objectives the company wanted to achieve.

The first external Stage 1 Audit was undertaken by an independent BSI (British Standards Institution) auditor, Ian Smith, experienced in the IT field. Ian conducted an initial assessment of the quality and environmental processes. Each audit took place over a full day with the auditor reviewing paperwork and systems in place in relation to the company's management procedures.

For the ISO 9001 Stage 1 Audit this included the scope and exclusions of the quality management systems, quality policy, quality manual and procedures, control of records, corrective and preventive actions, nonconformity records and a management review.

The ISO 14001 audit day followed suit with the auditor checking documentation, legal requirements, and measurable objectives whilst evaluating the cutting edge environmental hardware and applications recommended by director, Roland Nowak, Nova IT Solutions - which include power saving monitors,

virtual servers and solar powered keyboards.

A full report described the processes passed by the auditor and as no non conformances were found in either Stage 1 Audit, this permitted the company to progress to Stage 2 Audit within a short period of time.

The planning and preparation at detail level between the directors of Nova IT Solutions and their consultant, Dave Hall, enabled the company to undertake the Final Stage 2 Audit with minimal disruption to daily activities and a final positive recommendation to BSI for ISO certification in both BS EN ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001.

'Obtaining ISO 9001:2008 and 14001 has been a magnificent achievement for Nova IT Solutions, reflecting the way we conduct ourselves and the way customers view us. I believe we are in a strong position to not only survive the current economic downturn, but are also increasing our client base on a monthly basis, whilst providing the same high level of customer care. We have already had encouragement from large organisations and secured business

that we could not have obtained prior to certification.

In addition to our customer service awards, we have recently been notified that we are finalists in the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Awards. I feel that the improvements to the standards and management systems of our company have been recognised by the judges and contributed to this achievement. I would highly recommend anyone to consider undertaking the stringent but rewarding UKAS accredited ISO process'.

#### Further information:

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**British Standards Institution: Andy Wilson** Tel 01908 228060  
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