

# What is ISO? Why Compliance matters?

## The role of a Compliance Officer.

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In recent years we have been bombarded from all sides with terms like Management Systems, ISO, compliance etc. Moreover, in many public tenders there are conditions for competitors to be compliant with various ISO management systems, depending on what type of goods or services sought for in any given tender.

So, what is ISO, what are all those management systems and why should we comply? Despite the general belief, ISO is not an abbreviation of the International Organisation for Standardisation as most of us believe. ISO actually derives from the Greek word “ἴσος” which means equal. International Organisation for Standardisation was founded after the Second World War when the need arose to create international military standards. In 1947, ISO officially came into existence with 67 technical committees; groups of experts focusing on a specific subject. Today, ISO has 163 member countries and over 19 000 standards which cover almost all aspects of business and technology.

We now live in a real time world. World that is defined by huge quantities of electronic information being generated and transmitted ever faster from multiple locations using multiple channels of distribution. Most of this information is unstructured. It means something to the people who created it and will mean something to some of the people who receive it, if they have enough contexts. Document capture, as we know it, has developed from a simple conversion of paper into images and conversion of selected parts of the image into data, and then evolved further into an automated, intelligent “understanding” of the document image and of its relevance to a user’s business.

Documented management system of policies and procedures ensures that appropriate attention and protection is given to all records, and that the evidence and information they contain can be retrieved more efficiently and effectively using standard practices and procedures.

This is why we need to comply. By having documented policies and procedures in place, companies and organisations will assure all stakeholders that they will have required information on time and when needed. Last but not least, operations will be carried out with budget accuracy that will benefit all stakeholders. One look at the ISO Survey statistics results in comparison to economic results will be more than enough proof to justify why to comply.

Within the first ten top countries in 2011 for ISO 9001 certification are Germany, UK, France, Italy, India, Brazil and Republic of Korea. China tops this list.

There are numerous benefits to the companies with implemented compliance systems in place. Most important of all is the economical side of it. Properly documented procedures and records maintenance enable a company to measure its productivity and streamline its processes in turn increasing profits. It is well known that “you cannot manage what you don’t measure”. Regular audits and checks will not only ensure the company’s improvement, but will assure customers and other stakeholders that the company is honest and always strives to better serve its stakeholders.

Having the above information in mind, it is a necessity for every company today to employ a professional Compliance Officer who is not just an administrator or a secretary. Compliance officers are the performance auditors who ensure that businesses and other organizations are properly following the growing maze of laws, regulations, permits, licensing requirements, internal policies and procedures according to implemented management systems. A compliance officer is the guardian of a company’s integrity. Hiring the compliance officer helps to provide shelter from sanctions in the event of legal/regulatory difficulty, contributes to the establishment of an ethical culture, helps companies’ management to prevent misconduct or effectively address it when it occurs and provide public demonstration of the organization’s commitment to integrity.

It is no surprise that a Compliance Officer is ranked as #4 Business job in the top 100 list of US News and World Report and the unemployment rate for Compliance is under the 5% threshold which used to signify full employment in USA.

