

WHAT IS ISO 9000 SCHEME

P P Jayasinghe

"Writing what you do and doing what you write" is the best way of explaining this widely acknowledged standardization Scheme. It can find application in all industrial processes and service - oriented activities. The phrase given above is a motto adopted by the International Standards Organization.

The 9000 scheme comprises of three representative systems, that is ISO 9001, 9002 and 9003. The formative period of this scheme extends back to nineteen eighties and had been revised subsequently, the latest being in 1994. It has embraced even the environment by laying down guidelines and procedures to preserve the sanctity of working atmosphere and environment.

What does ISO mean: Organization for International Standards which is based in Geneva, Switzerland. This ISO 9001 system relates to industries who manufacture a finished product for a customer using other raw materials. For example the tyre can be made out of natural or synthetic rubber. In this instance the tyre, a finished product designed for a particular use, is placed under the ISO 9001 category, while the rubber (raw material) is covered under ISO 9002. Similarly a table - fan may need steel, iron, copper and plastic parts in its assembling. The table - fan proper will come under ISO 9001 as it has to be designed to satisfy the customer while copper wire, plastic and steel should be covered by ISO 9002 as raw - materials by a supplier. The third, ISO 9003 is designed to cater to service oriented ventures such as Hospitality industry, Hospital services or even car - servicing.

Basically these three systems have one thing in common, that is the extensive nature of documentation. Firstly, there is a comprehensive compilation called a Quality Manual. Quality Manual deals with the policy, of the organization towards maintaining the quality of a product or service and the commitment of the authorities, of the management and other connected information like adherence to the policies on purchase of raw material; maintenance of equipment used in the manufacturing process; storage of finished/semi - finished produce; presentation, marketing and provision of training for working staff, with specific details given in black and white.

The second set of documents are termed Procedure Manuals. These manuals describe the objectives and procedures involved in each and every step along the chain of manufacturing process or service. These documents are self explanatory and guarantee that the quality of all processes are well maintained.

Thirdly, a set of documents are drafted with the actual worker/operator in mind. These are specific instructions in simple step by step or point form, on the job, one has to perform. They could be in the form of write - ups, drawings or even cartoons. These are simply called work or job instructions.

In addition to the above documentation a fourth aspect too can be included in the form of descriptive leaflets, covering spheres of health hazards, housekeeping, cleanliness, environment or any other general subject.

The message of this scheme is non other than to instil in the minds of people, an understanding on the quality. The consumer at the receiving end should be aware that he is getting a genuine product worth his money. The quality is assured by the certification of the manufacturer by any one of the 9000 series standardization schemes. Once the manuals are completed and organization is streamlined, the approval should be obtained from a reputed accredited agency, specialized on the ISO 9000 scheme. In Sri Lanka it is the national Standards Institution (SLSI) that is empowered to do such certification. On submission of manuals and an application, the authorities at SLSI would visit the premises for verification. After a thorough inspection they would issue a certificate of conformance. But everything has to be in its place and all activities should conform to what is laid down in the manuals. The performance of the employees should be of the highest order and the team - spirit should be cultivated before one could obtain such certification.

Once the organization is certified alright the operations would go on smoothly according to a certain pattern. But frequent supervision and surprise checks have to be carried out to verify whether operations are deviating even slightly from this pattern owing to boredom, lethargy or even frustration. In such instances the cause should be found out and corrective action taken upon immediately.

The ISO 9000 standard scheme is a practical one though we may find it difficult to implement this in Sri Lanka due mainly to financial restrictions. Nevertheless it is imperative to introduce this scheme to as many industries as possible to enable the country and the nation achieve Newly Industrialized Country (NIC) status by the year 2000. Only two more years are there to show the commitment of the top management to harness whatever resources they may have and achieve this goal.

This scheme appears to have been imposed on us by the developed countries, EEC, Japan, U.S.A. who had already cautioned the developing countries that no exports would be allowed from the latter to those countries without the ISO 9000 label.

There is a famous scripture uttered by Lord Buddha and being exhorted in Dhamma sermons ever since.

**"Yatawadi Thathakari; Thathawadi Yatakari;
"Do what you say and say what you do".**

Which means we have been very close to the ISO 9000 scheme from good old days but not following the above principle.