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ISO Experts for Small Business

Understanding what's required for

ISO 9001 Certification

by Core Business Solutions Co-Founder & President

Scott Dawson

Understanding what's required — for — ISO 9001 certification

Written by: Scott Dawson, President

Welcome! This guide is designed to give you a high-level overview of the ISO 9001 process and to briefly explain how Core Business Solutions can help you achieve ISO compliance.

When my brother and I started this company, we knew the process to achieve ISO compliance was complicated and time-consuming, but also often required of small businesses by their customers. With our experience in quality management and software development, we worked to simplify the ISO process and to make it easier than ever for companies like yours to reach their goals.

Scott

Scott Dawson

What is ISO?

ISO 9001 is an international standard that specifies requirements for quality manufacturing and services.

Why should I care?

Companies all across the world use the standard to show their customer that they have the ability to provide consistent products and services that meet, and often exceed, the customer's requirements.

Why should I read further?

This guide explains what is required to achieve certification and will also explore how Core Business Solutions can partner with you to achieve certification – simply, quickly, and cost-effectively.

What are the steps to get certified?

Core Business Solutions' step-by-step process can move at the pace you need to become certified. Because we work with hundreds of companies each year across the United States, we have a proven process and experienced consultants that specifically fit your organization.

We boil the process down into four steps – a simple, achievable approach to ISO certification that is designed for your success.

1 Learn the requirements of the ISO 9001 Standard

Once you have chosen Core Business Solutions (CBS), your consultant will help you take the complicated, complex ISO jargon, and simplify it to fit your business on your time. You will learn all the ins and outs of the requirements before you start to dig into the work.

Example: ISO 9001 Standard Section 4: Context of the Organization states "The organization shall determine external and internal issues that are relevant to its purpose and its strategic direction and that affect the ability to achieve the intended result(s) of its quality management system (QMS)." Our consultants translate by asking you a question, "What are the internal and external conditions in which your business operates, things that surround your business: people, suppliers, competitors, workforce, regulations, etc." We help you filter out those things that have the greatest impact on your QMS and help you document and monitor those things.

2 Create required documentation

Your consultant will help you develop your QMS manual and all required documentation to ensure quality. We simplify wherever possible.

3 Implement QMS

Your consultant will work with you to conduct your management review (the leadership meetings ensuring you meet the ISO requirements). We also ensure you have the processes in place to make your quality system measurable and repeatable for customer satisfaction.

4 Conduct your Internal Audit

Your consultant will assist you in conducting your Internal Audit (it's the practice audit to make sure you are ready for the certification audit and have all documentation and processes in order).

After you've completed your preparation steps, you are ready for the Registrar certification audit.

This is the real last step … a Core-recommended, accredited third-party auditor will come to your facility and will perform an audit on the quality management system you have developed. With Core's help, certification will be no sweat!

What do you do once you are certified? Staying Certified

Ok, we may have fibbed. The TRUE last step in the process is staying certified, and Core can help you ensure your new QMS system is sustainable for years to come.

How much time does it take?

4 Months is the average time to achieve certification. We've gotten customers certified in as fast as 30 days to meet a contract deadline, while other customers take a bit more time (up to 6 months).

How much does it cost?

There are two costs involved in certification:

1. The preparation cost or consulting fee
2. The Registrar certification cost

Core Business Solutions has programs as low as $5,000 for micro businesses to help you prepare for certification. The cost of the Registrar audit varies depending on the scope and size of your organization, but our average customer can expect between $2,500 and $3,000 for the certification audit. A very small business can certify with as little as $7,500.

So why Choose Core Business Solutions?

We are people people. We pride ourselves on connecting with our customers and on building relationships that make the process of certification enjoyable. Our work isn't just about the certification – it's about improving your business so that you can guarantee your future success.

All of our consultants have worked in industry for several years (many of them are experienced quality managers) and have a thorough knowledge of how to implement ISO 9001. They have experience with a variety of customer segments including government services, machine shops, manufacturers, engineering firms, electronics, distributors, and many other service-orientated organizations. We pair up the perfect consultant for you based on where they are located in the United States and your business type to provide the perfect fit for efficient and effective ISO project implementation.

Our consulting programs provide a dedicated consultant, a project manager, and a customer success team. We offer a number of options for small businesses at costs you can afford. We even offer special micro business programs for businesses that have 1-2 employees. Our average customer size is 12 employees; however, we do have customers with 150 employees or more. When you speak with a sales consultant, he or she can guide you to the program that is the best fit for you.

We provide training, too. We help you learn the standard, we create your documentation, and we help you conduct your management reviews and your internal audit. Our CORE ISO Compliance Platform is a great resource for your training, documentation, process plans, measurement, and continuous improvement, and our Community Forum connects you with hundreds of other businesses who are seeking ways to improve and mature their QMS for years to come. We work WITH you every step of the way to get you ready for certification, and we provide continual learning opportunities for our customers so that they have the resources to constantly improve their QMS and maintain their certification.

Choose us for our unique approach to ISO certification. We pair technology with personal consulting as you prepare for certification. We provide you the peace of mind you need knowing you will be certified, painlessly and efficiently, in no time at all. And we offer the tools and support to ensure you can maintain and improve your QMS year after year.

About the ISO 9001:2015 Standard

The ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System standard is the best known and most widely-pursued ISO standard. More than 1.4 million companies and organizations world-wide are formally certified to ISO 9001, proving that the quality of their products and services are the best in their industry.

Benefits of ISO Certification and an efficient QMS

- Improves quality and service
- Reduces your costs
- Highlights deficiencies
- Provides continuous assessment
- Showcases continuous improvement
- Ensures higher customer satisfaction
- Improves customer relationships
- Spurs business growth
- Encourages new business opportunities

The ISO 9001 standard is based on the QMS principles found in ISO 9000:

- Customer Focus
- Leadership
- Engagement of People
- Process Approach
- Improvement
- Evidence-based Decision Making
- Relationship Management

In 2015, the ISO standard was updated to make requirements better suited for small businesses. The ISO 9001:2015 version is still widely used for global supply chains, government procurement officers, and other market drivers as a supplier management tool. Some of the top objectives for the ISO 9001:2015 version update are:

1. Make the requirements equally useful to product-oriented, (e.g. manufacturers, distributors, etc.), service-oriented, and other non-manufacturing businesses.
2. Put greater emphasis on the process approach and measurable results to demonstrate continual improvement.
3. Provide greater flexibility in how documentation, leadership and other management system activities are addressed to adapt to specific needs of individual companies.
4. Expand preventive action into risk-based thinking to include planning, identification and addressing risks faced by the company that may impact its products, services and customers.
5. Align the ISO 9001 requirements with related standards such as ISO 14001, ISO 45001 (old OHSAS 18001), ISO 27001 and others to make it easier to maintain more than one certification.

The resulting changes make ISO 9001certification more effective in helping companies of any size, in any industry, manage risk, improve quality, and better serve their customers. At the same time, many aspects of the quality management system will be able to be greatly simplified and specifically tailored to your needs and your team.

Core Business Solutions aims to "interpret and fit" the standard requirements to your organization, simplifying the process, and adding value wherever possible to create the most efficient and effective QMS for you.

Moe' Youness, Quality Control Manager • ISO 9001:2015 Certification • American Label & Tag, Inc.

What Core Business Solutions' customers are saying:

Jason S.

This group really knows their stuff!!!! The program they offer is well documented, easy to implement and the project management is top notch! They truly deliver a white glove service! and guide, advise and lead you through the entire process.

Jodie D.

Core Business Solutions provided top-tier guidance through the ISO 9001:2015 certification process. Our consultant is a subject matter expert in the standard, highly organized, and readily available for any questions outside of scheduled meetings. VEQTOR received unconditional recommendation for certification by PRI Registrar, based on our preparation through CORE. VEQTOR received certification within 10 days of Stage II Audit. The CORE documentation platform is also easy to use, ISO compliant, and simplifies document management.

Lisa S.

With Core Business Solutions' help, we have been certified under both ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 9001:2015 while other small businesses in our area remain uncertified despite having begun their ISO journey ahead of us…and they've spent significantly more money doing it. Core is a great value, great product and great service. Those are the same things we used to describe Kegman too.

Jean L.

On behalf of my ISO Team and Expanded Technologies as a whole, I would like to thank The Core Solution for guiding us to perhaps one of our greatest accomplishments. Certainly the greatest accomplishment I have been at the helm of. Between your industry leading platform and Paula Taft (our consultant's) ability to interpret the Standard, we got to where we set out to be. We look forward to continuing our journey of manufacturing excellence with your company and the resources it has to offer.

Jeffrey J.

We at Welbilt just want to once again say thank you to the entire Core team for the excellent service and support throughout our certification process. A special thanks goes out to Marla, our consultant, she was AWESOME!

Jack S.

Accu-Mold Plastics just finished up our two and a half day Transition Audit. We made it through with zero non-conformances. The auditor had only good things to say about our QMS and the supporting documents. Just wanted to say thank you for all the support, recommendations and help with preparation. Core Business Solutions is awesome.

About Core Business Solutions, Inc.

Founded in 2000 by brothers Scott and Mike Dawson (a former Quality Manager and engineer). We are a small business headquartered in Lewisburg, PA serving the United States in Canada with ISO consulting services. We have consultants located in all major metropolitan cities of the United States. We developed the CORE ISO Compliance Platform to assist small businesses in the implementation and maintenance of their Quality Management Systems. We provide consulting services to hundreds of small businesses each year and take great pride in helping them become certified and improve their companies.

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About the Author -- Scott Dawson, President of Core Business Solutions, is an active voting member of the US Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to ISO Technical Committee 176 (ISO/TC 176), which is responsible for drafting ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 international standards on quality management systems. The US TAG Group wrote the revised 2015 Standard, so Scott Dawson has the inside details about the Standard and knows how to simplify it for small business.

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