How to integrate 2015 revisions of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001

WHITE PAPER

Making certification simple.

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Introduction

Ever-increasing competition on the market and higher environmental awareness are driving companies to implement both ISO 9001 (click here to learn more about ISO 9001) and ISO 14001 (click here to learn more about ISO 14001). The need for implementing both standards has existed in a lot of industries for some time, and it hasn't stopped its ascending trend. Now, when the new versions of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 are present, the best option is to integrate standard requirements and create an Integrated Management System (IMS).

Implementation of both standards at once, or implementing one standard on top of another, doubles the challenges – even the things that seem easy during implementation of one standard can be problematic. Since the complexity is growing, the necessity of the systematic approach was never so crucial.

Why integrate?

Having two management systems instead of one requires doubling time and resources for their maintenance. This includes performing the same activity twice, like internal audit or management review, not to mention piling up the documentation.

In some cases, each of the standards is implemented by a different person, so the systems may follow different logic or structures. Also, the documents and processes that are common for both standards can be established differently, so this can bring additional complexity to an already complex system. Having two separate management systems inside one company can easily be turned into an organizational nightmare, and instead of contributing to the company, they become a burden that everyone avoids and the standards are only formally implemented.

On the other hand, having one Integrated Management System (IMS) that meets the requirements of both standards facilitates the maintenance and coordination of the activities. One short glance at the text of the standards shows great similarity of the requirements, especially now that both standards are aligned with Annex SL (for more information about Annex SL, see Has the PDCA Cycle been removed from the new ISO standards?). One of the objectives of revision of the standards was to facilitate their integration, and that is the reason why the common requirements of both standards have the same clause numbers.

For more information, see Integrating ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 and ISO 14001:2015 integration with ISO 9001:2015 – What has changed?

Common clauses of ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015

As mentioned earlier, the new versions of the standards are following the Annex SL structure and are more compatible than ever. The principal benefit is that the same requirements are under the same clause numbers in both standards. Here is an overview of the clauses and their similarities. Since the requirements are located in the clauses from 4 to 10, we will focus on:

Clause numbers		Note
ISO 9001	ISO 14001	
4 Context of the organization	4 Context of the organization	The requirements are the same, only ISO 9001 refers to quality while ISO 14001 refers to the environment.
5 Leadership	5 Leadership	The requirements are the same; only the requirements for the policies are different.
6 Planning	6 Planning	In addition to addressing risks and opportunities, which is required by both standards, ISO 14001 has additional requirements related to environmental aspects and compliance obligations. The requirements for the objectives are almost the same, only ISO 9001 refers to quality while ISO 14001 refers to the environment.
7 Support	7 Support	The requirements are the same.
8 Operation	8 Operation	Both standards require the organization to establish operational controls for processes, only ISO 9001 refers to quality while ISO 14001 refers to the environment. ISO 14001 has additional requirements for emergency preparedness and response.
9 Monitoring, measurement and analysis	9 Monitoring, measurement and analysis	The requirements are the same, only with different perspectives. ISO 9001 has additional requirements for monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction.
10 Improvement	10 Improvement	The requirements of both standards are the same.

Using benefits as explained in this section standards requirement integration could offer following:

- Possibility to preserve resources
- Possibility to decrease the volume of the documentation
- Possibility for better connection between the processes and activities
- Possibility to avoid overlapping and doubling activities, etc.

Where to start?

The starting point for the implementation or integration process can be different depending on the situation in the company. The company may be implementing the standards for the first time, it might already have implemented one of the standards and wants to upgrade the system by implementing the second one, or the company might have implemented both standards and now wants to integrate them into one system. This equation can have additional variables, like if an old version of the standard is implemented, so the project of integration would include the transition as well.

It is vital to determine the starting point and the current state of the management system, and to define what needs to be achieved. The frequent doubt these days is whether to implement the old versions of the standards or to go straight with the new ones. There is no doubt; every new integration or implementation should be performed according to the new version of the standards. Going with the old versions would seem easier at first, but you can't avoid the imminent transition process to the new standard version.

People are often in doubt as to where to start and what standard should go first. Actually, the standards should be implemented simultaneously, following the PDCA cycle (for more information about PDCA, see Plan-Do-Check-Act in the ISO 9001 Standard), meaning to start from the requirements for determining context of the organization from both standards and move forward to the continual improvement.

For more information, please take a look at this useful handbook: Preparations for the ISO Implementation Project: A Plain English Guide.

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Developing a project plan

Making such a complex system shouldn't be done ad hoc. For successful implementation and later maintenance it is crucial to approach it systematically and develop a project plan with precisely defined activities, resources, responsibilities, and deadlines.

This enables the company to clearly identify what needs to be done, how long it will take, and who will do it in the best way. Distribution of the responsibilities and tasks will facilitate the integration and allow some of the tasks to be performed simultaneously, which will result in decreasing the time needed for the project.

The diagram below shows the timeline and sequence of the activities to be performed and requirements to be met in order to acquire certification both for ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.

The best way to start is to perform a gap analysis and determine what requirements of both standards are already met, and what needs to be done to achieve full compliance.

Depending on the starting point mentioned earlier, the gap analysis results may show discrepancies between standard requirements and organizational practice, and can give a direction for certain implementation activities.

Implementation activities can vary depending on organizational standardization stage, and could mean that:

- It is only necessary to implement the requirements of the new versions of standards.
- It is possible to integrate the common requirements of the standards that are already implemented.
- It is necessary to implement new standard/s.
- It is necessary to conduct a transition of the already implemented standard.
- It is necessary to implement both standards at once from the beginning.

Either way, the integration is a good opportunity to revise the existing system and introduce the improvements.

For more information, see: Four things you need to start your ISO 9001 project and 5 elements of a successful ISO 14001 project.

Defining the scope of the Integrated Management System

To set the foundation for the system, the company must first determine the scope of the system, meaning to what processes and locations the system applies. Having two separate systems for ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 allows having separate scopes, and this can be convenient in some cases, but for most companies both systems will have the same scope. The scope is usually the entire organization, or it could be only some of the processes and locations, while others are left out from the scope. For more information, see: How to define the scope of the QMS according to ISO 9001:2015 and How to determine the scope of the EMS according to ISO 14001:2015.

Both standards require the scope to be documented (see here a free preview of Scope of the Integrated Management System); the only difference is that ISO 9001 allows organizations to determine what requirements of the standard are not applicable to the organization, and can therefore be excluded from the scope of the IMS (Integrated Management System). This is a new approach in ISO 9001, compared to the previous version of the standard that stated which clauses could be excluded; however, the new version does require the organization to provide justification for exclusion, so not all exclusions are easily justifiable. In practice, the exclusions will be made only from clause 7.1.5 and from clause 8. For more information, see: What clauses can be excluded in ISO 9001:2015?

Searching for common ground

The next step is to identify all common requirements of the standards, and this is not a short list. Basically, clauses 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10 are almost the same, with some small differences.
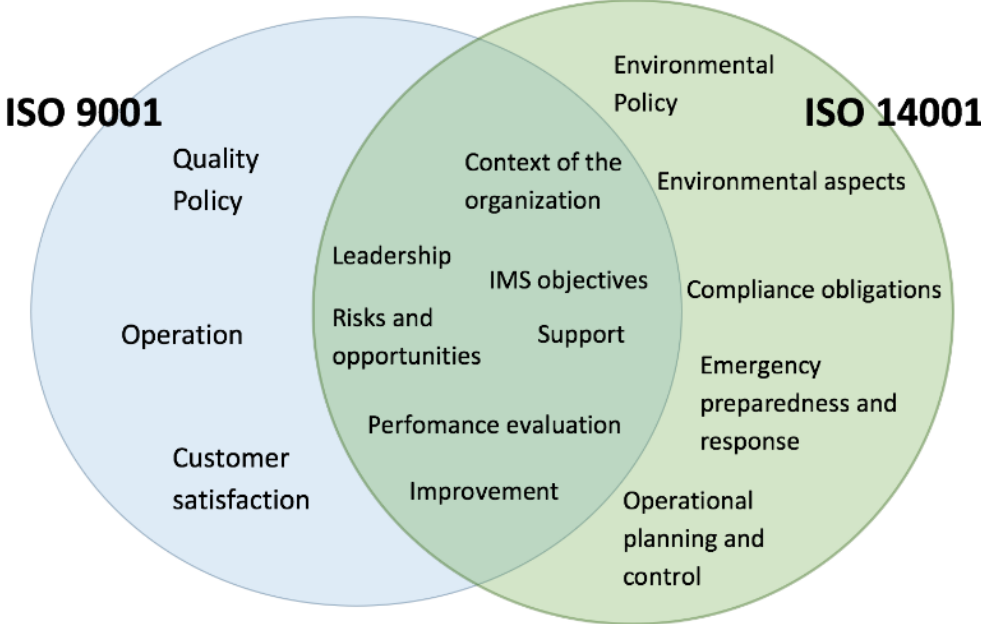

Figure 1

As shown in Figure 1, there are quite a lot of common requirements that, will small adaptations, can be met through a single process or document. Skipping this step will dramatically increase the number of activities and volume of your documentation.

The next sections will explain how the standard requirements should be met, what are their similarities and differences, and the sequence of implementing the requirements.

Context of the organization

This is a well-known new requirement and it is present in both standards, so it is logical to fulfill it at once for both standards. Determining issues relevant to the purpose and strategic direction of the company must cover both quality and the environment. If one of the standards is already implemented, the scope of the process needs to be expanded to cover both standards. In the case of transition and implementation for the first time, the process of determining context of the organization needs to be implemented from scratch. Although the standards do not require a documented procedure to address this clause, it might be good to have one since the process is new for the company (here you can find a free preview of our Procedure for Determining Context of the Organization and Interested Parties). For more information, see: How to identify the context of the organization in ISO 9001:2015 and Determining the context of the organization in ISO 14001.

Interested parties

Identifying interested parties is a requirement of both standards as a part of defining context of the organization. Interested parties to be identified are the ones relevant to the quality of products and services and customer satisfaction, as well as for environmental protection and compliance obligations. This process also includes identifying their needs and expectations related to the IMS. For more information, see: How to determine interested parties and their requirements according to ISO 9001:2015 and How to determine interested parties according to ISO 14001:2015.

Leadership and commitment

Leadership and commitment are to be demonstrated by taking accountability for the effectiveness of the system, establishing and communicating quality and environmental policies, setting the objectives, and complying with other requirements prescribed by clause 5.1 of both standards. In addition to these requirements that are pretty much the same, ISO 9001 puts extra emphasis on the customer focus. For more information, see How to comply with new leadership requirements in ISO 9001:2015 and How to demonstrate leadership according to ISO 14001:2015.

Policies

The requirements for the quality and environmental policies can be met either by combining them into one integrated policy or by having separate policies for quality and the environment. The important thing is that they are compliant with the requirements of the standards. Both policies must be appropriate to the purpose and context of the organization and aligned with the strategic direction of the company, and they must provide a framework for setting the objectives and include commitment to the continual improvement. The difference is the Quality Policy includes commitment to satisfy applicable requirements, while the Environmental Policy includes a commitment to the protection of the environment and fulfilling compliance obligations. The requirements for communicating the policies are the same in both standards. For more information, see How to Write a Good Quality Policy and How to write an ISO 14001 environmental policy.

Risks and opportunities

This requirement is new for both standards and the purpose is the same: to replace preventive actions and to enhance a proactive approach to the management system. Neither ISO 9001 nor ISO 14001 requires formal methodology or a documented procedure for addressing this requirement, but ISO 14001 requires documenting risks and opportunities to be addressed and actions to address the risks and opportunities. The purpose of addressing risks and opportunities is the same: to mitigate risks that affect the organization's ability to meet its objectives and to seize the opportunities for improvement; the only difference is that ISO 9001 is referring to the quality and customer satisfaction, while ISO 14001 is referring to environmental protection. Although the documented procedure is not required, it might be useful to document all the elements that need to be considered when identifying risks and opportunities and planning actions to address them (here you can find a free preview of Procedure for Addressing Risks and Opportunities). For more information, see Risk-based thinking replacing preventive action in ISO 9001:2015 – The benefits and Risk Management in ISO 14001:2015 – What, why and how?

Identification and evaluation of environmental aspects

The obligation for development of the methodology for evaluation of environmental aspects and criteria for determining their significance is a specific requirement of the ISO 14001:2015 standard, but it is also related to clause 4.4 of ISO 9001, which emphasize the necessity to define organizational activities in a systematic way. For more information, see 4 steps in identification and evaluation of environmental aspects.

Determining compliance obligations

This requirement is more specific in ISO 14001, because it requires a compliance analysis with national legal requirements regarding environmental protection, but it can be merged easily with the process of identification and evaluation of interested parties and their needs and expectations when you perform the organizational context definition. Compliance obligations are important because they have to be taken into account when establishing, implementing, maintaining, and continually improving the IMS. They also need to be documented, and this can be done in the same place with other interested parties (here you can see a free preview of List of Interested Parties and Their Requirements). For more information, see Compliance requirements according to ISO 14001:2015 – What has changed?

Setting the objectives

The requirements for quality and environmental objectives are pretty much the same; they need to be consistent with appropriate policy, measurable, monitored, communicated, and updated as appropriate. Again, the company may use a single document to record the objectives for quality and the environment, or make separate documents. Having them in one place will enable the company to monitor them as a part of the single process; also, during the management review, it will be easier if you have all the information in one place. Since now both standards require planning actions to achieve objectives, it is much easier for the company to have all that information in one place and plan resources for their achievement. For more information, see How to Write Good Quality Objectives and How to Use Good Environmental Objectives.

Operation

This is the core of the standard, the Do phase, and here the integration brings the highest benefits. If the company has integrated ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 systems, operational planning and control will not be conducted separately and will not double the use of resources in some phases. This facilitates establishment of the systems, but it brings difficulties when performing the activities. The people who will be conducting the operational controls for ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 are the same ones in charge of the processes, and will get instructions from different sources. For ISO 9001 the instructions will come from process procedures, while ISO 14001 instructions will come from the procedure for operational controls of the environmental aspects. This can be confusing, and may lead to contradiction in the instructions to the employees. And, by coordinating the employees from different sources, it may lead to unnecessary activities or doubled activities just because the two procedures refer to the same process.

That is why it is important to include the requirements of both standards when developing a procedure for a single process. When defining the requirements for the products and services, establishing criteria for processes, defining resources, and fulfilling other requirements for ISO 9001 operational control, it is vital to include requirements for operational controls of significant environmental aspects within the processes. If significant environmental aspects emerge from the process, operational controls regarding the aspects must be included in the procedure that defines how the process is conducted. This will result in having one workflow for the process without risk that something is left out or the sequence of activities is jeopardized.

For more information, see Understanding relationship between environmental aspects and operational procedures.

Support processes common for both standards

Managing resources – This can be done in the same way and be compliant with the requirements of both standards, only ISO 9001 defines resource requirements and separates them into several sub-clauses: people, infrastructure, environment for the operation of processes, monitoring and measuring resources, and organizational knowledge.

Competence and awareness – Requirements for competence and awareness are the same, only they refer either to quality or to the environment, but they can be met through the same process. And, this can even facilitate the process since all the training and awareness-raising sessions will be coordinated with a better overview of the resources needed and avoid overlapping engagement of people, facilities, and other resources. For more information, see How to ensure competence and awareness in ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001 Competence, Training & Awareness: Why are they important for your EMS?

Communication – The core of the requirements in both standards are the same, but ISO 14001 additionally expands the requirements by dividing them into internal and external communication, emphasizing compliance obligations and consistency of information and their reliability, and requiring documented information about the communication when appropriate. The same communication process can be established to meet requirements of both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 by defining what will be communicated, when, to whom, and how. For more information, see How to perform communication related to the EMS.

Documented information – The requirements regarding documented information are identical in both standards, so the process of document and record control will be integrated easily. Having an integrated process that defines creation, update, distribution, withdrawal, and retention of documented information will facilitate control of documents and records throughout the organization, ensuring that the valid version of the document or record is in the place of application. For more information, see New approach to document and record control in ISO 9001:2015 and A new approach to documented information in ISO 14001:2015.

Monitoring, measuring, and analysis

Both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 require the organization to define what will be monitored and measured, how, how often, and how the results will be analyzed. Besides the different perspectives of the standards, the difference is that ISO 9001 has a separate sub-clause with requirements regarding monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction, while ISO 14001 has additional requirements for the evaluation of compliance. For more information, see Analysis of measuring and monitoring requirements in ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001 Monitoring & measurement equipment control.

Internal audit

The internal audit is the same in terms of how it is conducted for both standards; the difference is in the clauses and requirements to be audited. Having one process for internal audits of both standards will facilitate coordination and planning of the audits; the fact that they are part of the same system doesn't mean that the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 requirements must be audited at the same time, but having one internal audit program (here you can find the free preview of Internal Audit Program) for both standards will help the organization to plan the audits better and avoid overlapping of resources. For more information, see Five Main Steps in ISO 9001 Internal Audit and Using internal audits to drive real improvement in ISO 14001:2015. The short handbook ISO Internal Audit: A Plain English Guide will help you as well.

Management review

As far as the management review is concerned, top management is always happy when their time is saved by having one meeting for discussing the topics related to both standards. Once all the reports and input elements for management review are gathered in one place, it will be much easier to make decisions, since all of this information will provide a better perspective on the whole system and its performance. For more information, see How to Make Management Review More Practical and The importance of management review in the ISO 14001:2015 process.

Improvement

Having one process for identification of nonconformities and managing corrective actions is another easy win for the Integrated Management System. Regardless of the origin and the part of the system (quality or environment) where it emerged, nonconformities and be resolved in the same way and this fact should be used to develop a single process for managing nonconformities and corrective actions. For more information, see Five Steps for ISO 9001 Nonconforming Products and Environmental Nonconformity Management: How is ISO 14001 different from ISO 9001.

Conclusion

Having one Integrated Management System instead of two separate systems makes the implementation harder, since the people involved in the project must always consider the requirements of two standards instead of one, but at the end the effort invested in the project will be fruitful. Among others, the greatest benefits of having an Integrated Management System are:

- decreased volume of documentation
- better coordination of activities and resources
- integrated workflow of activities without overlapping and doubling tasks
- systematized information for more effective management review

The key point of a successful integration project or any implementation project is good understanding of the requirements and how they can be fulfilled, with small engagement of the resources, and yet achieving ultimate effect. To learn more about the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 standards, visit these free online courses: ISO 9001:2015 Foundations Course and ISO 14001:2015 Foundations Course.

Useful resources

These online materials will help you with the integrated implementation of ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 9001:2015:

- ISO 9001 & ISO 14001 Integrated Documentation Toolkit – full set of documents with expert support.
- Webinars - if you are not sure where to begin or how to comply with ISO 14001, registering for some of our webinars could be a good starting point.

References

- EN ISO 9001:2015 Quality management system – Requirements
- EN ISO 14001:2015 Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use
- 9001Academy
- 14001Academy
- 27001Academy

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