

Summary of the last lecture

A Norm is a set of international standards approved by an organism, which gives guidelines for activities to guaranty an optimal level of organization.

A Certification is an activity thought an organism gives an insurance that an organization is conform to some specifications (often given by a norm).

Norms dates back to the World War II, created to unify and standardize products and services. Then they continuously evolved and were improved, and today as well. There are different types of certification organism: ISO is one of them, which sets up a norm that evolved in 1987 and 1994 to have some shortcomings from TQM perspective. It finally becomes the norm ISO 9000, regrouping several standards such as ISO 9001 -about Quality Management- or ISO 9004 -about Performance Improvement-. ISO combines the three standards 9001, 9002, and 9003 into one, called 9001: 2000. The ISO 9000: 2000 add finally the standard ISO 9004:2000. This norm is about business excellence, demanding involvement of the top management, avoiding delegation of quality functions to lower level management, and integrating quality into the business system. We have other standards such as ISO 14000: a set of standards for environmental management systems, but in this summary we will focus on ISO 9000.

ISO 9000 is a set of international standards on quality management system and quality assurance, vital to international business, and giving 23 requirements reported in 5 fields: Management responsibility, Resource management, Product/service realization, Measurement, analysis and improvement and about the Quality Management System.

ISO 9000 is based on 8 principles: Focusing on customer, Using Leadership, Involving People, Approaching by process focusing method, Handling management with a systems approach, Improving continually, Making decision with a factual approach, and Having beneficial relationships with suppliers. We can add to that list the fact that all the fields of the company who apply to ISO 9000 must be documented and must be auditable.

But why use ISO 9000? Because that can help the company so much to have an optimal organization and an appropriate and efficient Quality Management System: that permit for example more effective operation and better process control, increased flow and productivity, reduction of cost, product scrap & rejections, improve product reliability, empower employees, document the processes, give a framework for continual improvement of each process or simply demonstrate to the customer the organization's commitment to quality standards.

However, to set up a norm can be expensive (in time and money), and very bureaucratic, and some critics say that this method is quite defensive and product oriented. Moreover, the norm remains focused on production. And finally for the customer, a norm can mislead companies into thinking that certification means better quality.

To conclude, we can say that a norm have to be considered as a set up of guidelines for good practices, as a base to compare the company with other competitors or to know what level of organization it has, and as a standard giving a common vocabulary and a shared vision of the organization.