

Introduction

A business needs to produce quality products or services in order to compete. Using standards helps a business to maintain the quality of its products and services. BSI is the National Standards Body of the UK. It was the first such body in the world. It creates standards with business and other groups. One of the most well known symbols of BSI is the Kitemark. It shows that a product or service has been tested against a standard. Organisations can also build systems to ensure and maintain quality. These can be checked against the international standard ISO 9001.

Quality

Quality is defined by the customer. Any product or service that does the job the customer wants it to do is a quality product or service. Businesses can create quality products and services by finding out what customers want and providing it. They ensure quality through

- * Market research - finding out what people want.
- * Working to best practice standards - Using guidelines agreed with BSI and the sector in which they work.
- * Quality Management Systems (QMS) - making sure that systems conform to the standard.

The importance of quality

To be a success, a business needs loyal customers. Loyal customers will use the product or service again because they are satisfied with what they have bought. If a product is tested and shown to be safe and reliable, customers will be happier to buy it. Standards protect consumers by making products safer to use. To work well, as technology changes and the needs of consumers change, standards need to be updated. For instance, ISO 9001 started out as a British Standard. It has been updated regularly and is now used as an international standard all over the world.

Quality Management Systems standard - Internal

A system is a group of parts and processes that are used to perform a task. A QMS is a group of parts that is set up to maintain quality. The parts of a system are inter-related so must all conform to the standard. ISO 9001 is a QMS standard. It sets out eight quality needs that must be met.

These include:

- * customer focus
- * leadership
- * the involvement of people
- * continual improvement.

To qualify, a business must meet customer and legal needs. It must apply its system to improve customer satisfaction.

Quality Management Systems standards - External

External systems are those that the firm deals with outside its own systems. These include, for instance, suppliers. Many modern products have long supply chains. Parts or processes may be made or take place anywhere in the world. All firms therefore rely on each other for quality. Having international standards like ISO 9001 helps to maintain consistent quality and build confidence.

Implementing a Quality Management System standard

To implement ISO 9001 a business needs to:

- * Read and understand the standard
- * Involve management
- * Train a Quality Manager
- * Develop its own system.
- * Create and implement the QMS.
- * Ask an assessor to test the system against the standard.

Conclusion

Standards are vital to business. They help to keep customers loyal. This leads to business success. International standards help to build confidence in world trade. BSI, through its role in the creation of standards, is helping businesses to succeed.