

## Creating world class quality standards

### Quality processes

Businesses that work with international standards can create quality systems covering every aspect of their business.



For example, a number of organisations work with BSI to create Quality Management Systems (QMS). To achieve ISO 9001, organisations must meet eight quality management principles. These include:

- \* customer focus
- \* leadership “commitment to quality by the leaders of the organisation
- \* involvement of people “everyone in the organisation has a part to play
- \* making sure that those processes which create quality are identified
- \* continual improvement of the system.

When the organisation feels confident it is meeting the standard, it informs an assessor. The assessor will assess the effectiveness of the QMS. If it meets the standard a certificate will be awarded. This is subject to regular reviews.

As well as building internal systems (inside the organisation), external systems (such as suppliers) must also meet quality standards.

### **The supply chain**

Today, many businesses have long supply chains. This means they may source materials, parts and finished goods from across the globe. For example, consider a modern plasma screen television. Some of the components may come from India, others from China or Eastern European countries. These separate components are put together into a sub-assembly i.e. part of the finished television. Sub-assembly may take place in one country, with final assembly of the whole television taking place in another.

Unless all the businesses involved work to the same standard, the parts will not be able to be assembled properly. This working together is known as interdependence.

### **Standards in real life**

To illustrate how important quality standards are, consider this case study on MC Fire Protection Ltd.

MC Fire Protection was established by Mike Chilman and is based in Bicester, Oxfordshire. It has been providing fire

protection services for over 30 years. The company employs a team responsible for covering the supply, installation and maintenance of fire extinguishers and fire alarm systems. It also offers a consultancy service for all aspects of fire risk management. The company has earned an impressive reputation in the fire industry.

Changes in British and European legislation and demands from insurance companies are causing an increase in sales of fire systems. Businesses are legally required to take steps to protect themselves, staff and customers from the danger of fire. Fire protection relies heavily on fire extinguishers and fire alarms. These have to comply with the fire safety standards. This means that users are confident the equipment will do its job.

Companies that provide fire risk assessments and consultancy services use these industry standards. By obtaining ISO 9001 registration, the company can show that the whole service is professional and quality assured.

The Managing Director of MC Fire Protection, Mike Chilman, explains why ISO registration is so important.

*'In 2004 our competitors were starting to publicise the fact that they complied with ISO 9001. Many businesses prefer to trade with companies that comply with recognised standards rather than with those that do not. On a practical level, ISO 9001 had made positive changes with improvements to our workshop, supply chain and record-keeping.'*

*'All the standards we apply have brought us extra reassurance. They help to show we are more professional, while our customers are confident that the services we provide are high quality. I would recommend standards to other businesses in the fire protection industry – in fact, it's becoming more and more of a necessity.'*