

## Creating world class quality standards

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#### Introduction

Customers expect to be able to buy products that meet certain standards. These standards can be written down and recorded as a set of rules or guidance. BSI stands for British Standards Institution. It was the world's first Standards body and is the National Standards Body for the UK. It creates national and international standards, tests products and assesses quality management systems. Standards, including international ones, are based on agreed best practice and businesses are keen to be seen to be adhering to them in the global marketplace. There are thousands of standards covering all manner of goods and services.

#### Quality

A quality product is one that meets customer requirements – it does what the customer wants it to do. This may be different in different markets (with different customers). Organizations often strive to give customers quality by building it into everything they do. They do this by using a Quality Management System (QMS). This provides a framework that helps the business improve all of its operations and outputs. BSI helps organizations to identify best practice and translate this into standards. Currently BSI publishes almost 20,000 standards, and each year adds 2,000 new or revised standards to this list.

#### Importance of standards

There are a number of levels of standards creation. The main ones are International Standards (ISO), European Standards (EN) and British Standards (BS). ISOs require international agreement, so are the most complex to develop. Standards are important because they protect consumers' safety, promote research and development and encourage organizations to share knowledge and expertise. For businesses that use them, they also lead to more effective competition. This is particularly true in markets where competition on price is difficult. Businesses must therefore compete on quality.

#### The Kitemark®

BSI is an independent organization. It works with both commercial and government bodies to make sure that safety and quality standards around the world are built into products. BSI also owns the famous Kitemark® symbol. This is a well-known symbol that shows that a product or service has been independently tested against a standard. Schemes cover various products and services as wide-ranging as lighting, fire extinguishers, 13 amp plugs, motor cycle helmets, and car repair garages. It shows that the organization is committed to safety and quality. The Kitemark® shows the customer that the product has been tested against the appropriate Standard. Some products need to conform to certain legal requirements. For example, CE marking shows that a product conforms to European Union regulations.

#### Processes

Organizations use a QMS to achieve the international standard ISO 9001. This shows that quality is built into all aspects of operations. These include both internal and external systems, so even suppliers have to conform to quality standards. Organizations must show that they meet eight quality measures to gain certification to ISO 9001.

**Conclusion**

Products “ goods and services “ are now made and sold on a global basis. It is therefore important that they are produced and delivered to international standards. BSI is actively helping to set these standards. It helps businesses to build reputations for quality, safety and reliability.