

QM&T May 2005 Newsletter

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Standards – raising their Profile

According to BS 0 Part 1 – 1981, a standard is a technical specification or other document available to the public, drawn up with the co-operation and consensus or general approval of all interests affected by it, based on the consolidated results of science, technology and experience.

However, the general public has very little appreciation of the importance of standards in their lives - imagine life without a standard light bulb, or standard screw thread. To try and improve this situation, several initiatives have been launched to highlight the benefits of standards and to make it easier for standards to be taught about in the schools.

Research has recently been carried out by the National Standardisation Strategic Framework (NSSF) on the benefits of standardisation for business, government and society. The research found that standards are an innovation driver, contribute to economic performance and are a source of information. (The NSSF was developed by the Department of Trade and Industry, the British Standards Institute and the Confederation of British Industry to provide a platform for increasing awareness use and understanding of standards and standardisation in the UK.)

The NSSF have also supported a free educational website that has been launched by BSI. This website provides support and information for students and teachers on standards and the role they have in every day life. This will be of particular help to students and teachers of courses such as GCSE and A Level Design & Technology, GCSE Engineering and GCSE Manufacturing.

As well as information aimed at this 14-19 age groups there is also information aimed at the 7-11 and the 11-14 age groups. There is teacher-tailored content with lesson plans and activities, as well as test and games for the students.

To find out more about the NSSF, visit www.nssf.info. For access to the educational website please visit www.bsieducation.org

The Department of Education and Skills (DfES) are also trying to reach students. They have launched a new e-Learning strategy with the aim of helping students reach their potential. 'Harnessing Technology: Transforming Learning and Children's Services', provides information on the use of digital and interactive technologies in education and children's services. According to the strategy, the aim is to 'build the common ground that brings all out education and children's services to the critical baseline of being able to use the technology well'.

A copy of the government's e-strategy can be obtained in full or summary from www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy

Could BS 15000 be fast tracked to ISO status?

BS 15000, the IT Service management standard was only launched in 2004, and is a world first of its kind. There is great interest in the standard and several organisations have already achieved registration. Discussions have been held with the International Standards Organisation (ISO) about 'fast-tracking' this standard to ISO status.

For further information please visit www.iso.ch



Sustainable Olympics

The London 2012 team have committed to making the 2012 games the first “sustainable” Olympics. They are working with the BSI to scope a ‘one-off’ sustainable events management standard to complement ISO 14001. One of the goals of the London 2012 team is social, economic and environmental excellence through sports and this approach will help them to achieve this goal.

Customer Billing

The British Standards Institute has released a Draft for Public Comment (DPC) on a new draft standard on customer billing. The ‘Specification for Customer Billing Practice’ applies to services from utilities suppliers to the newer service providers such as mobile phone services. The minimum requirements for suppliers of services that issue periodic billings are specified, including requirements for the billing document and for the process itself. According to the BSI, the standard aims to:

- Set minimum standards of billing services for consumers
- Give consumers a clearer understanding and greater certainty of the billing process
- Minimise complaints by addressing issues that have been the source of frequent complaints about billing
- Promote informed customer choice
- Provide assistance in meeting corporate social responsibility obligations.

Brian Such of BSI has said “The standard has been developed to improve the billing process for both companies and consumers. It will help businesses produce clearer, more precise bills and help their customers understand them”.

The DPC is open for responses until May 2005, and information on submitting comments can be found at www.bsi-global/british_standards/DPC/index.xalter

ISO 26000 – Future Guidelines on Social Responsibility

Last month, in Brazil, the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility met to launch the development of the future ISO 26000 standard on Social Responsibility that is due for publication in 2008. The ISO ensured that the new standard will benefit from input from all those interested in social responsibility by making sure that there was a balanced representation from all stakeholders, including industry, government, labour, consumers, nongovernmental organisations and others.

This first meeting concentrated on discussions and making decisions on the scope of the standard, the terms of reference of the Working Group, the structure of the Working Group, the allocation of the leadership of sub-groups, the development of the working procedures, target publication date and how to communicate the work that will be going on.

The Working Group Chair, Mr Jorge Cajazeira of Brazil said “Despite the large numbers and the fact that for many participants, it was their first-ever contact with the ISO standards-development systems, a good, balanced representation was achieved and the meeting was very productive, formulating resolutions that begin to pave the path forward for the actual work on the standard itself”.

For further information, please visit www.iso.ch

ISO 9001:2000 – What does it mean in the supply chain

The International Standards Organisation has recently released an information brochure called ‘ISO 9001:2000 What does it mean in the supply chain’. The brochure addresses the following issues:

- What is ISO 9001:2000
- What does ‘conformity to ISO 9001:2000 mean?
- How does ISO 9001:2000 help managers to select a supplier?
- How can managers have confidence that a supplier meets ISO 9001:2000?
- Can suppliers claim that their goods or services meet ISO 9001:2000?
- What to do if things go wrong

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Nigel Croft of the ISO 9000 Advisory Group (IAG) has said, 'The IAG developed its informative brochure for the intended audience of purchasers in a business-to-business environment, who are not necessarily certified or even familiar with ISO 9001:2000..... A reasonable expectation of customers of organisations that claim to have an ISO 9001:2000 based quality management system should therefore be that the product or services they receive is in fact realised in conformity to those requirements on a consistent basis. It was with these issues in main that the ISO Advisory Group developed the new brochure.

The brochure is available free of charge on the ISO's Website, www.iso.ch

Are Home Workers a security risk?

In a study carried out by Novell, it was found that 80% of Britons admit to not taking computer security precautions when working from home. According to Novell this poses a security threat and could cost businesses an estimated £8.5 billion/annum. The study found that, when working at home, standard IT procedures are more likely to be ignored and it is more likely that virus-infected programmes are downloaded.

Steve Brown of Novell says that business can protect against the security treat by taking the responsibility off home workers.
(BBC News)

Is Car Manufacturing Dead in the UK

Although a great deal has been made about the failing of Rover, there is successful volume car manufacture in the UK. There are success stories all around the country, unfortunately these rarely make the headlines and this gives the impression that car manufacturing is dead.

Where is one of the most productive car manufacturing plants outside Japan?

Sunderland

Where do the Japanese design their award winning cars?

Cranfield

What has car manufacturing productivity been doing in the last few years?

Dramatically Improving

Thus, although the situation at Rover is very sad and the impact it has had on the lives of the people involved and the local area is devastating, it is not the death of car manufacturing in the UK.

A Risk too far?

Boston, Lincolnshire has cancelled its flower show because it was said to be too risky to run without licensed stewards. The borough council took the decision because of health and safety issues and concerns about being sued. They have also scaled down their St George's Day parade following risk assessment.

Whereas, across in Italy, fans take flares along to football matches. Italians argue that the flares make the whole event more colourful and that the authorities tend to turn a blind eye. Further, if the flares are thrown onto the pitch, then apparently most club directors would still not condemn the fans.

The two stories above show that Health and Safety issues and the compensation culture vary widely across Europe. It seems a pity that the compensation culture in the UK has forced Boston borough council to take the decision they did, although the Italian attitude appears too risky from the UK perspective. Reaching the right balance between risk and return is difficult!