Is it time to consider the benefits of Integrating your Business Management Systems?

Are your Business Management systems still working in silos?

There comes a point in the development of many organisations when they need to obtain some form of certification, and for the majority they will probably implement a business management system for either Quality, Environmental or Health & Safety.

There then follows a period of time where their requirements for certification will be covered with a single business management system.

However, once an organisation grows to a point where it requires more than one business management system, that is the time for top management to step back and consider adopting a more integrated approach.

Yet too many organisations miss this opportunity and implement their business management systems as stand-alone platforms. They then end up with individual business management systems working in silos.

For some organisations, working in silos may be the most suitable way to function, and there may be operational reasons why this approach works best for them.

But working in silos also has a downside…

Silo Mentality (as defined by the **Business Dictionary**):-
"a mind-set present when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same company. This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce moral, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture."

Whilst an integrated business management system may not work for every organisation, for many the long-term benefits will far outweigh the short-term effort required to move forward.

So why not integrate your business management systems?

You can eliminate all the inefficiencies and duplication of activities that are part and parcel of having individual systems working in silos?

But how easy is this to achieve?

The PDCA Structure:- Plan - Do - Check - ACT

All current ISO standards for Business Management Systems are structured to promote and develop "Risk Based Thinking" within an organisation. They also bring two other aspects into the business management systems arena.

One of these is Annex SL and the other is the PDCA structure. Lets come back to Annex SL later, and deal with the PDCA structure first.
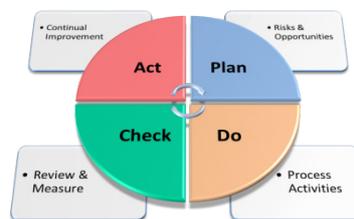
The PDCA structure functions as follows:-

P = Plan

D = Do

C = Check

A = Act

Plan
Top Management must assess the risks & opportunities that may impact on the organisation and carry out the planning required to ensure these risks do not affect the organisations ability to deliver its "desired outputs". Exploiting any opportunities that have been identified should also be planned.

Do
Process activities must be carried out in such a way as to ensure they are aligned with the outputs of the planning processes.

Check
Top Management must review & measure the organisations performance against their objectives.

Act
Top Management must also plan & implement any actions that will deliver continual improvement.

The PDCA structure now applies to every new ISO standard, including ISO 9001:2015 [Quality], ISO 45001:2018 [Occupational Health & Safety] and ISO 14001:2015 [Environmental] Security Management, and every system you implement will follow the same structure.

The net result is that it is now possible to implement an integrated business management system that combines Quality, Environmental, Health & Safety and Information Security.

The PDCA structure also means it is possible to integrate the common aspects of your business management systems.

Can Management Systems really be more effective if they are integrated?

The Benefits of Integrated Business Management Systems
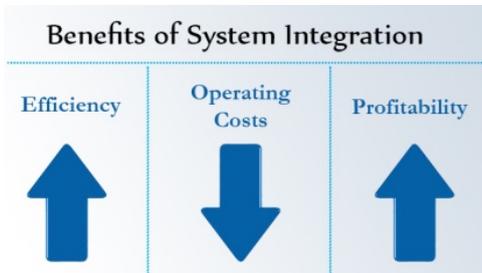
Once an organisation has decided to integrate its business management systems then it's at this point they can start to see the real benefits.

Organisations that have already implemented a single business management system based around the PDCA structure will find it up to 50% quicker when they come to implement their next business management system.

With this integrated approach, much of what is needed from the management team can now be done under one umbrella, and top management can now take a broader view of their organisation whilst undertaking the following activities:-

- Planning
- Assessments of Risk & Opportunities
- Internal Audits
- Management Reviews
- Continual Improvement

Organisations can now implement an integrated solution that covers all of the following:-

- ➢ Business Risks & Opportunities
- ➢ Customer Requirements
- ➢ Customer Satisfaction
- ➢ Environmental Aspects & Impacts
- ➢ Occupational Health & Safety Risks and Hazards

Whilst the "desired outputs" of each organisation are always unique, one way or another they all lead back to either Compliance [with Legislation] or Customer Satisfaction. Once Compliance or Customer Satisfaction can be monitored, they can be measured. And as the saying goes:-

"What gets measured gets done…."

The end result is that:

- ✓ The organisation can now be managed using joined-up thinking.
- ✓ Auditing models can be revised to provide a much broader remit, but with fewer audits.
- ✓ KPI's & SMART objectives can now be aligned.

But just how well are all the different standards able to interact, and how easy is it to implement a single integrated solution across 2, 3 or 4 different business management systems?

That's where Annex SL comes in…

What is Annex SL?

Annex SL is an ISO document that defines a high level structure [HSL] for the framework of a generic business management system.

It was first published by ISO's Technical Management Board (TMB) in 2012 and the recent release of ISO 9001:2015 has been revised to align with Annex SL.

Annex SL arrived with a vengeance with the latest version of ISO 9001:2015, and is here to stay. All new ISO business management system standards now adhere to the Annex SL framework.

As a result of the introduction of Annex SL, all ISO business management system standards will become more consistent, and hence more compatible. They will share the same look and feel, having been built on a common foundation. The structure of all business management systems will now include the following sections:

- ✓ Context of the Organisation
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Operation
- ✓ Performance Evaluation
- ✓ Improvement.

There are common core definitions too; the following words will have the same interpretations across all Annex SL standards:

- conformity
- continual improvement
- competence
- corrective action
- documented information
- effectiveness
- interested party
- management system
- measurement
- monitoring

- non-conformity
- objective
- outsource
- performance
- policy
- process
- requirement
- risk
- stakeholder
- top management

Annex SL represents the beginning of the end of the conflicts, duplication, confusion and misunderstanding arising from subtly different requirements across the various business management system standards.

Auditors now face the challenge of focusing their own, and their clients', thinking on viewing organisations' business management systems holistically.

And that can only be a good thing…