Publicizing your ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification

Introduction

What is the purpose of this document?

Proud of your organization achieving ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification, you now want to communicate this success to the market place. The following guidelines from ISO will help you to apply good practice in publicizing, communicating and promoting your certification to stakeholders including staff, customers and business partners, and to the general public.

These guidelines will prove useful in preparing promotional and communication material such as press releases, advertisements, marketing brochures, videos, staff announcements, logos, slogans and catch lines for diverse media ranging from print and broadcasting, to Internet and multi-media applications, to product labels, signs, banners, vehicle fleets and so on.

Who will find it useful?

The guidelines address the needs of a wide range of potential users:

– top management
– quality and environmental managers
– public relations, marketing and advertising departments – both in-house and external agencies supplying these services
– graphic designers
– publishers and journalists
– accreditation and certification bodies, and management system consultants (who are encouraged to communicate these guidelines to their clients)
– customers of certified organizations
– consumer associations who wish to monitor best practice by certified organizations
– informed members of the public.

How do I use it?

You have three options depending on your time, level of interest, or depth of your need to understand:

1. Read only the "In brief" section. It will tell you what to do, what not to do and gives some concise advice. It does not give explanations.
2. After reading "In brief", read the *italic* bullet point sections beginning with the word **Remember**. These give a minimum of explanation.
3. Read the whole document if you want to understand the reasoning behind the guidelines, or need to explain them to someone else.

What if my organization implements these guidelines?

By using ISO's guidelines, you will avoid the pitfalls of false, misleading or confusing statements in your communications about ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification and thus avoid harming the credibility of your organization. If you follow the guidelines, you will be demonstrating the same rigour in your communications about certification as you have done in implementing your ISO 9001 quality management system or ISO 14001 environmental management system.

In brief

- In the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 contexts, "certified" (and "certification") and "registered" (and "registration") are equivalent in meaning and you can use either term.

- Specify to which ISO 9000 standard your organization is certified.

- Specify whether the ISO 9000 standard concerned is the 2000 or a 1994 version.

- If your organization is certified to ISO 9001:2000, use the full designation (not just "ISO 9001").

- Replace use of the generic terms "ISO 9000 certification" and "ISO 14000 certification" by the specific terms "ISO 9001 certification" and "ISO 14001 certification".

- Don't use ISO's logo.

- Don't adapt or modify ISO's logo for your use.

- If you want to use a logo, ask your certification body for permission to use its logo.

- Don't say your organization has been "accredited".

- Don't use "ISO certified", or "ISO certification".

- Use instead "ISO 9001 certified", "ISO 9001 certification", "ISO 14001 certified", or "ISO 14001 certification".

- Don't display ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification marks of conformity on products or product packaging, or in any way that may be interpreted as denoting product conformity.

- Don't give the impression in any context that ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certifications are product certifications or product guarantees.

- When including a reference to ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification in product-related information, including advertisements, do not do so in such a way that may be interpreted that ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 are product certifications or product guarantees.

- Be accurate and precise about the scope (the extent) of your organization's ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification, both as far as the activities and geographical locations covered by the certification are concerned.

Remember !

- *Remember: Organizations should be precise about which ISO 9000 standard they have been certified to – the 2000 or a 1994 version – in order to avoid confusion. In particular, they should not mislead the market into believing that they have been certified to the new, improved ISO 9001:2000 version if their certification is, in fact, to one of the older, 1994 versions.*

- *Remember: It is time to replace references to "ISO 14000 certification". When publicizing certification to ISO's environmental management system standard, the only fully accurate term to use is "ISO 14001 certification".*

- *Remember: ISO has no "ISO 9000 logo" or "ISO 14000 logo". In addition, you are not allowed to use ISO's logo, which is copyrighted. ISO will take whatever actions it considers necessary to prevent the misuse of its logo.*

- *Remember: You can't use ISO's logo, nor adapt or modify it. If you adapt your organization's existing logo to communicate its certification, or if you have a new logo designed to convey this, they should not be capable of being mistaken for the ISO logo. If you want to use the logo of your certification body, you will need to ask for its authorization.*

- *Remember: It is okay to state either that your organization has been "certified" or "registered" because their meanings are equivalent for practical purposes, but inaccurate to state that it has been "accredited" (unless your organization is a certification/registration body).*

- *Remember: The terms "ISO certified" and "ISO certification" should not be used because they carry the potential for misleading people into thinking that it is ISO which has carried out the certification. Use instead "ISO 9001 certified", "ISO 9001 certification", "ISO 14001 certified", or "ISO 14001 certification".*

- *Remember: ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 give generic requirements for management systems, not requirements for specific products or services. ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications are not product certifications or product guarantees. Great care must therefore be taken in the wording of any references to them which appear in product-related information, including advertisements, or on any other support, in order to avoid giving the impression that they are product certifications or product guarantees. In particular, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certification marks of conformity are not to be displayed on products, or on product packaging, or in any way that may be interpreted as denoting product conformity.*

- *Remember: ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates are issued for scopes of activity, which are specified on the certificate. You should be just as specific when publicizing that certification. Do not misrepresent the scope (the extent) of the certification, either as far as activity or geographic location is concerned.*

Transition to ISO 9001:2000

Previously, "ISO 9000-certified" organizations were actually certified to one of the three certification standards in the 1994 version of the ISO 9000 series: ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003. The scope of these standards differed, but they were of equal rank. Therefore, it was acceptable for organizations publicizing their certification to use either the generic term "ISO 9000 certification"*, or to specify ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003.

On 15 December 2000, the revised and improved ISO 9001:2000 was published to replace the three 1994 versions and thus became the only certification standard in the ISO 9000 series. Organizations certified to the 1994 versions were given a three-year period, until 15 December 2003, to make the transition to ISO 9001:2000. During the transition period, new certifications to the 1994 versions remain possible.

As a result, particular care is needed when publicizing certification so that confusion about which versions are being referred to – those of 1994 or 2000 – is avoided. In particular:

1. The previously acceptable generic terms "ISO 9000 certification" or "ISO 9000 certified" now risk creating confusion between the 1994 versions of ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003, and ISO 9001:2000 – the new standard that replaces all three. Therefore, certified organizations should specify to which ISO 9000 standard their quality management system has been certified: to ISO 9001:2000, or to a 1994 version.

2. Organizations publicizing ISO 9001:2000 certification should use the standard's designation in full (not just "ISO 9001"), in order to underline their achievement of meeting the requirements of this new, improved version.

3. Organizations publicizing certification to the 1994 version of ISO 9001 should specify this to avoid misleading people into believing that the organizations have been certified to the upgraded 2000 version.

4. Organizations currently publicizing their certification to a 1994 version of ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003 should be aware that the closer the 15 December 2003 transition deadline approaches, the more they are underlining their conformity to standards which have been replaced by a newer, upgraded version.

    - *Remember: organizations should be precise about which ISO 9000 standard they have been certified to – the 2000 or a 1994 version – in order to avoid confusion. In particular, they should not mislead the market into believing that they have been certified to the new, improved ISO 9001:2000 version if their certification is, in fact, to one of the older, 1994 versions.*

* In business transactions, however, an organization should specify the standard to which it was certified because, for example, the scope of ISO 9001:1994 included design requirements, which were not addressed by the other two standards.

ISO 14000 or ISO 14001?

Despite the fact that ISO 14001 is the only certification standard in the ISO 14000 family, the use of the phrase "ISO 14000 certification" has been acceptable in the past for the sake of consistency with the use of the generic term "ISO 9000 certification", which covered certification to the 1994 versions of ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003.

ISO 9001:2000 has replaced these 1994 versions and both the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families now contain only one certification standard each. Therefore, use of the phrase "ISO 14000 certification" should now be replaced by the only fully accurate term – "ISO 14001 certification".

- *Remember: It is time to replace references to "ISO 14000 certification". When publicizing certification to ISO's environmental management system standard, the only fully accurate term to use is "ISO 14001 certification".*

ISO's logo

Upon certification, many organizations turn to ISO to request use of "the ISO 9000 logo" or "ISO 14000 logo". No such ISO logos exist. There is only the ISO logo itself, which is a registered trademark. Unless authorized by ISO, use of its logo is prohibited. ISO will not allow its logo to be used in connection with the certification of management systems, even when these certifications attest conformity to ISO 9001:2000 (or to 1994 versions of the ISO 9000 series), or to ISO 14001. Examples of unacceptable use of the ISO logo would include use on products, product labels and product-related information, on Web sites, in marketing materials, advertisements and company letterheads.

Allowing the ISO logo to be used would give the false impression that ISO carries out certification activities, or has approved or authorized the organization using its logo. These activities are not business functions of ISO.

ISO is not an auditor, assessor, registrar, or certifier of management systems, products, services, materials or personnel, nor does it endorse or control any such activities performed by other parties. ISO develops International Standards but does not operate any schemes for assessing conformity with them. ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates are issued independently of ISO by more than 750 certification bodies worldwide, although the organization does develop voluntary standards and guidelines to encourage good practice by these certification bodies, and by the accreditation bodies that approve the latter as competent.

ISO reserves the right to take appropriate action when its logo is used without its permission, or if it is adapted or modified. These remarks apply not only to certified organizations, but also to accreditation and certification bodies, and to consultants and trainers involved in activities related to ISO's management system standards. They also apply to publishers and journalists when illustrating material dealing with ISO and its standards, whether in hard copy or electronic publications, or on Web sites. Prior permission must always be sought for the use of ISO's logo.

- *Remember: ISO has no "ISO 9000 logo" or "ISO 14000 logo". In addition, you are not allowed to use ISO's logo, which is copyrighted. ISO will take whatever actions it considers necessary to prevent the misuse of its logo.*

What logo can I use?

Your organization may well want to communicate its certification visually in the form of a logo, which can be used, for example, in advertisements, in company liternature, on company flags or vehicle fleets. What can you do and not do?

Certified organizations cannot use ISO's logo, adapt or modify the ISO logo.

One option is to use your organization's own logo, adapting it by embedding the information that your organization is certified to ISO 9001:2000 or ISO 14001. A second option is to create a new logo with this information. However, if you choose either of these options, the logos should not be designed in such a way that they could be interpreted as being ISO's logo.

A third option is to apply to use the logo of the certification body which has audited your organization and issued an ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certificate of conformity. The logo belongs to the certification body and you will therefore need its permission to use its logo, and to respect whatever guidelines it has for the logo's use. A possible extra benefit will be that if the certification body is accredited*, you may also be authorized to use the logo of the accreditation body.

- *Remember: You can't use ISO's logo, nor adapt or modify it. If you adapt your organization's existing logo to communicate its certification, or if you have a new logo designed to convey this, they should not be capable of being mistaken for the ISO logo. If you want to use the logo of your certification body, you will need to ask for its authorization.*

* See section headlined "Certification, registration and accreditation".

Certification, registration and accreditation

Your organization's management system has been independently audited and confirmed as being in conformity with ISO 9001 or ISO 14001, for which you have been issued a certificate. In announcing this, which is the correct term to use: "certification", "registration" or "accreditation"?

Let's take the first two. According to the standardized definitions*, they are not quite the same thing. In context of ISO 9001 or ISO 14001, "certification" refers to the issuing of written assurance (the certificate) by an independent external body that has audited your management system and verified that it conforms to the requirements specified in the standard. "Registration" means that the auditing body then records your certification in its client register.

So, your organization's management system has been both certified *and* registered. For practical purposes then, in the ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 contexts, the difference

between the two terms is not significant and both are acceptable for general use. "Certification" seems to be the term most widely used worldwide, although registration (from which "registrar" as an alternative to registration/certification body) is often preferred in North America, and the two are also used interchangeably.

On the contrary, using "accreditation" as an interchangeable alternative for certification or registration is a mistake, because it means something different. In the ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 contexts, accreditation refers to the formal recognition by a specialized body – an accreditation body – that a certification body is competent to carry out ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification in specified business sectors. In simple terms, accreditation is like certification of the certification body. Certificates issued by accredited certification bodies – and known as "accredited certificates" – may be perceived on the market as having increased credibility.

- *Remember: it is okay to state either that your organization has been "certified" or "registered" because their meanings are equivalent for practical purposes, but inaccurate to state that it has been "accredited" (unless your organization is a certification/registration body).*

* See ISO/IEC Guide 2:1999, *Standardization and related activities – Vocabulary*, and the draft ISO/IEC DIS 17000, *Vocabulary for conformity assessment*. The latter will replace clauses 12 to 17 of ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996.

The little difference that means a lot

Can you see a difference between "ISO certified" and "ISO 9001 certified", or between "ISO certification" and "ISO 14001 certification"? Does the difference appear minimal? Maybe, but the possibility for misunderstanding is substantial.

For example, when your organization puts out a press release to announce its certification, you may be clear in your own head that where the text refers to your "ISO certification", you of course mean "ISO 9001 (or ISO 14001) certification". But what about your audience? They could certainly understand "ISO certification" as meaning "certification carried out by ISO". You would therefore be adding to the common misconception that it is ISO which issues ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates, or which controls the bodies that do so. You need to take care not to imply that ISO audited your organization and certified it – although it is perfectly okay to give information on ISO as the source of ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.

ISO recommends that, in the interests of transparency, you specify which certification body has awarded your certificate.

- **Remember:** the terms "ISO certified" and "ISO certification" should not be used because they carry the potential for misleading people into thinking that it is ISO which has carried out the certification. Use instead "ISO 9001 certified", "ISO 9001 certification", "ISO 14001 certified", or "ISO 14001 certification".

Process, not product standards

ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 state generic requirements for management systems implemented by any organization, in any sector of activity. They apply to the processes that an organization employs to realize its products or services – in other words, the way it accomplishes its work and meets the customers' requirements. ISO 9001 applies to the processes that influence product or service quality, and ISO 14001 to the processes that influence the organization's environmental performance. ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 do not give specific requirements for specific products or services.

Therefore, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications must not be presented in any way that may be interpreted as their being product certifications or product guarantees. For example, customers and consumers must not be misled into believing that ISO 9001 is a product quality guarantee, or that ISO 14001 guarantees a "green" or environmentally friendly product.

Such misunderstandings can occur if a product has phrases such as "ISO 9001 certified", or "ISO 14001 certified" stamped on it, or included on the product label, or in an advertisement, or in other product-related information. This is unacceptable because it is not the product that has been certified, but the management system covering the processes through which it has been realized.

Therefore, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certification marks of conformity should not appear on products, or product packaging, or in any way that might be interpreted as denoting product conformity.

When your organization wants to communicate its certification via product-related material (excluding product packaging or the product itself), special care must be taken to to avoid the above misinterpretation, and to communicate accurately by phrases such as the following (taking into account the guidelines in the above sections "Transition to ISO 9001:2000" and "ISO 14000 or ISO 14001?":

- "The management system governing the manufacture of this product is ISO 9001 (or ISO 14001) certified.
- "The management system governing the provision of this service is ISO 14001 (or ISO 9001) certified"
- "ISO 9001-certified quality management system", or "ISO 14001-certified environmental management system"
- "ISO 9001 QMS", or "ISO 14001 EMS"
- "ISO 9001-certified processes", or "ISO 14001-certified processes".

- *Remember: ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 give generic requirements for management systems, not requirements for specific products or services. ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications are not product certifications or product guarantees. Great care must therefore be taken in the wording of any references to them which appear in product-related information, including advertisements, or on any other support, in order to avoid giving the impression that they are product certifications or product guarantees. In particular, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certification marks of conformity are not to be displayed on products, or on product packaging, or in any way that may be interpreted as denoting product conformity.*

The organization – or the system?

With ISO 9001 or ISO 14001, it is the management system that is certified, not the organization that implements the system. However, since the management system has no independent existence, it is acceptable for organizations with certified systems to describe themselves as certified *on condition that they specify the extent of the certification *.*

Certified organizations may therefore promote themselves via media such as company flags, paintwork of vehicle fleets, advertisements and letterheads as ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certified.

A number of certification bodies authorize certified clients to use special logos developed by the former which include phrases such as "quality assured firm", "quality assured" and variants. These are derived from the standardized definition of "assurance" which denotes a statement giving confidence that something fulfils specified requirements – such uses are acceptable.

* See section entitled "Scope of certification".

Scope of certification

ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications are specific. The certificate of conformity to the standard issued by your certification body specifies the scope (the extent) of activity for which the certificate is issued.

Therefore, when announcing your ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification in a press release, or in referring to it in media such as marketing or product brochures, or on Web sites, you should specify the scope of your organization's activities covered by the certification.

If only part of your organization's processes are covered by a certification, or only some of its business units or sites, it is unacceptable to mislead people by giving the impression that the whole organization has been certified for all its activities and processes, or for all its geographical locations.

- *Remember: ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates are issued for scopes of activity, which are specified on the certificate. You should be just as specific when publicizing that certification. Do not misrepresent the scope (the extent) of the certification, either as far as activity or geographic location is concerned.*

ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is the source of the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families of quality and environmental management standards and some 14 000 International Standards for business, government and society. ISO is a network of national standards institutes from more than 140 countries working in partnership with international organizations, governments, industry, business and consumer representatives.

For more information, visit the ISO Web site: **www.iso.org**