

# Iso program and structure 41464



## Overview of ISO

### Who ISO is

ISO (International Standards Organization) is a non-governmental organization of 157 countries as members. The Central Secretariat of the organization is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

Many of the member institutes of ISO belong to the governmental structure of their countries, others are deep rooted in the private sector; thus, ISO is viewed as a respected and honored institution among the public and private sectors. This allows ISO to effectively cater to the business and social needs of stakeholders from all sectors and domains.

### Why Standards Matter

ISO is the largest developer of standards in the world. Standards provide assurance in increasing quality, safety, reliability, efficiency and interchangeability while adding to the economical benefits. Whether it is production of goods and service, security, environment friendliness, health and security or international trade, the standards developed by ISO serve to provide high benefits to users, suppliers, producers, government, regulators and public in general. The conformity with standards provides assurance to the stakeholders that products and/ or services will operate as desired.

### How it all Started

The standardization began with the establishment of International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in 1906. Other significant contributions

in fields other than the electrotechnical field came through International Federation of the National Standardizing Associations (ISA) that was established in 1926. In 1946, it was decided to create a new international organization with objective i?? to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standardsi??. Hence, ISO came in to being and officially started operations on February 23, 1947.

### Hallmarks of the ISO Brand

The hallmarks of the ISO brand are summarized below:

Equal footing.

All members of ISO are treated equally towards development of standards. Having one vote per member regardless of the country to which he/ she belongs, ISOi?? s activities are carried out in democratic way at the strategic as well as technical and operational levels.

Voluntary.

ISO is a non-government organization and as such all the standards that are developed by ISO are not monitored for implementation as part of the regulatory mechanism. However, many countries and associations, realizing the value and impact of these standards, have made it mandatory for companies to comply in their respective countries.

Market driven.

Only those standards are developed by ISO for which there is a requirement in the market. Standards are developed by industry, technical and market experts and they are joined by other specialized knowledge bearers.

Consensus.

Since the standards are developed when there is a market requirement, and are finalized once consensus is obtained from the stakeholders, this ensures the wide spread acceptance once the standards are out. ISO reviews the standards once every five years to ensure these remain current and up-to-date.

Worldwide.

There are around 3,000 ISO technical groups including technical committees, sub-committees, and working groups having almost 5,000 experts who participate towards development of ISO standards and with their consensus, the standards are finalized.

What makes ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 so Special

ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series of standards have become the market's de facto standards for quality and environment management. ISO 9000 is related to quality management to achieve customer satisfaction and to meet regulatory requirements by continuous improvement in quality. ISO 14000 is concerned with environmental management and speaks of methods and techniques to reduce the harmful effects on the environment by organizations.

Most of the ISO standards are specifically applied to a product, service or a process. In contrast, ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 are generic management system standards. This means that same standard can be applied regardless of the size of the company and the industry in which it operates. These standards have provided a list of mandatory requirements that need to be fulfilled by aspiring company to get complied with the ISO standards, regardless of the nature of business. This generalization has given a unique specialty to ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 standards.

### ISO Structure

ISO is structured in a way that maintains democracy and clear line of reporting. The General Assembly is the highest body, which is chaired by the president of ISO. The General Assembly meets once every year to discuss ISO annual report, ISO strategic plan with financial implications, and discuss the annual financial report. The General Assembly consists of principal officers and delegates of member bodies.

The Council reports to General Assembly, and governs the operations of ISO. It consists of Officers and eighteen elected members. Its functions include appointment of the treasurer, the members of technical committees and the chairman of policy development committees. It also finalizes the annual budget that is then approved by General Assembly.

i?? The Central Secretariat acts as secretariat to the General Assembly, the Council, the policy development committees and their subsidiary bodies, the Technical Management Board and the committee on reference materialsi?? (ISO, 2007).

The council governs ISO committees like policy development committees, council standing committees, and ad hoc advisory groups. In addition, the council governs the technical management board under which lie other technical committees and advisory groups.

### ISO Code of Ethics

ISO has developed a professional code of ethics which is a binding on all members. Each member, though can delegate some of the responsibilities assigned to it, yet remains accountable and responsible for ISO code of conduct. The salient features of ISO code of ethics include the following:

i?? ISO members ensure fair and efficient development of international standards. They are required to ensure that the standardization process remains open, fair, impartial and transparent; and takes into account all relevant information and national as well as other factors that affect people.

i?? ISO members are committed to provide their best inputs for the work towards developing a standard and throughout the life cycle.

i?? ISO members promote the best practices and standards in their respective areas to overcome barriers of entry and technical limitations in developing a sustained environment for standardized processes.

i?? ISO members contribute to the development of best practices and promote their fair use by observing integrity, objectivity and impartiality.

i?? ISO members accept to contribute their share in terms of finances to maintain ISO infrastructure as per the decision made by ISO council.

?? In addition, all ISO members accept to make appropriate efforts to ensure proper use of ISO name, mark and logo and will act to prevent unauthorized use of ISO publications.

?? Finally, ISO members will contribute to spread awareness in member countries about ISO and standardization usefulness.

ISO Strategic Plan 2005 ?? 2010

Key items of the strategic plan for ISO for the period 2005 ?? 2010 include the following:

1. Develop internationally applicable and consistent standards in areas which do not have ISO standards at the moment.
2. Ensuring greater involvement of stakeholders to spread the voluntary adoption of ISO standards and best practices.
3. Spread awareness about ISO and its standards in developing countries and work towards increasing their capacity to adopt ISO.
4. Participate with other international bodies and organizations like IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) and ITU-T (International Telecommunication Union ?? Telecommunication Standardization Sector), to coordinate and cooperate in development of new standards.
5. Promote the use of voluntary standards like ISO in addition to, or in place of, technical regulations.

6. To get global recognition as the provider of international standards and guides.

7. Develop and provide tools and techniques that can be used efficiently to produce a coherent and complete set of standards with global applicability.

#### ISO 10014

ISO 10014: 2006 i?? i?? Guidelines for realizing financial and economic benefitsi?? provides guidelines to the top management of an organization to enhance performance. It provides recommendations, identifies methods, tools and techniques that can be used to realize financial and economic benefits while applying ISO 9000 quality management principles. ISO 10014 is not meant for certification.

#### ISO 14025

ISO 14025: 2006 i?? i?? Environmental Labels and Declarations i?? Type III environmental declarations i?? Principles and proceduresi?? builds upon the principles and recommendations provided by ISO 14020: 2000 for the use environmental information towards business to business communication.

#### ISO 14040

ISO 14040: 2006 i?? Environmental Management i?? Life Cycle Assessment i?? Principles and frameworki?? is a series of four standards that are developed after years of research and studies. These four standards are:

ISO 14040: Goal and Scope



ISO 14041: Life Cycle Inventory Analysis

ISO 14042: Life Cycle Impact Assessment

ISO 14043: Life Cycle Interpretation

These standards specify the requirements and the procedures necessary for the compilation and preparation of the definition of goal and scope for a life cycle assessment (LCA), and for performing, interpreting and reporting a Life Cycle Inventory analysis (LCI) (British Standards Institute, 2006).

ISO 14044

ISO 14040 provides principles and procedures for an environment management system; whereas ISO 14044 provides requirements and guidelines for a life cycle assessment (LCA). The purpose of this standard is to identify the best practices in life cycle management.

Development of ISO Standards

ISO standards are developed as a result of requirements that come from industry (proposal stage). Whenever an industry or business sector requires a standard, the request is passed to one of the ISO members. If accepted, the proposal is sent to technical committee. In addition, the three general policy development committees (Conformity Assessment CASCO, Consumer Policy COPOLCO, and Developing Country Matters DEVCO) provide strategic inputs encompassing cross-sectoral linkages and aspects.

The technical committee, that develops the standards, consists of industry experts, and other knowledge experts (preparatory stage). In addition,

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inputs are taken from a wide number of potential and related stakeholders to gain various views and insights.

Once a draft is developed, it is circulated as Draft International Standard (DIS) for comments (i?? committee stagei??). After getting approvals and feedback from all members (i?? enquiry stagei??) and making appropriate changes in light of the feedbacks to develop a final DIS, the draft is again sent for final approval to members (i?? approval stagei??). Once final approval is obtained, the final DIS published as an international standard by ISO Central Secretariat (i?? publication stagei??).

## Conclusion

ISO standards provide one best way to perform activities. Although, they do not provide the only way how certain functions can be performed and certainly do not restrict organizations to deviate from the recommended procedures; yet ISO standards are globally accepted as best practices and organizations are highly recommended to adopt ISO to improve their systems and processes. American companies can also make use of standards like ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series to ensure that their systems are aligned with benchmark standards.

It is expected that ISO will continue to impact organization around the world and might also be adopted by regulatory bodies in US. Hence, instead of waiting for it to happen and then act, US companies are advised to take a proactive approach and start following the best practices provided by ISO to enhance their business performance and overall productivity.

## **References**

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