

QUALITY APPLICATIONS

Third Time's the Charm

AEM Consulting Group Inc.

Custom Stamping Inc. produces precision stampings with a workforce of fewer than 30 and provides a telling example about the challenges that can come with seeking registration to ISO 9001.

Although Woody Wurster, president of CS, is a master tool and die maker, the compliance and auditing process required for registration was beyond his knowledge. He turned to a consulting company for help, then to a second, both times foundering in a paperwork-bloated process that never reached the internal audit stage. In each case, the consultants' approach did not mesh with CS's processes.

"I didn't know what to expect," Wurster recalls. "I thought it would be a simple matter of telling the consultants what we do and for them to come up with a manual that would explain it and allow us to become registered to ISO 9001. But it didn't work out that way."

AEM Consulting Group Inc. was chosen for the third effort, with Wurster making it clear that he wanted a lot less paperwork. AEM was able to produce CS's ISO 9001 manual at a third the size of the previous attempts. Here are the important components of the registration attempt:

- The corrective and preventive actions sections were combined, reducing the quality manual to just 32 pages.
- Management review, a key ISO 9001 requirement, was integrated into CS's regular production meeting by including a review of the company's operations.
- The internal audit was used to implement and sustain the system, with audit results presented at the production meeting.
- A formal corrective/preventive action process was merged with ongoing improvement efforts and a simple documentation method was implemented.

"We were able to produce the company manual, which was successfully used for ISO 9001 registration, at a third the size of the previous attempts," says Doug Anton, president of AEM Consulting. "The final product we created reflected what the company's everyday working experience was, and thus was something that could be worked with and understood."

The project began in July 2004 with a registration target of January 2005. Most of the previous work was discarded. A copy of the standard, an often-overlooked tool, was used to educate employees, along with AEM's *ISO 9001 Survival Guide*. A previously prepared flowchart of the entire value stream became the basis for the company's quality management system.

When the CS team and AEM designed and documented the company's existing system, reviewed it for needed improvements, and then compared it to the ISO standard, they found that the company was already complying with more than 80 percent of the requirements. The finished documentation includes the quality manual, combined with brief descriptions of the following operating procedures: quality system, management responsibility, product realization, internal audit, and control of monitoring and measuring devices.

Each section has a Scripted Flowchart Process (a unique method developed by AEM) with a concise policy section followed by a flowchart that details the responsibility and necessary actions for the numbered flowchart blocks. Documents used in each step are shown in bold and underlined, then divided into uncontrolled, controlled and records sections.

The system was completed in November and sent for a documentation review to the registrar, DNV Certification, which found no nonconformities. Subsequently, DNV



performed a two-day preassessment and recorded a total of 12 observations. These were very useful as the team continued refining the system and addressing the findings, which were minor in nature and easily fixed. As a result, when the registration auditors arrived in January, the team was well-prepared.

The first and second days came and went with no findings. By midmorning on the third day, it was over and the closing meeting provided a well-earned cause for celebration: No nonconformities had been found, and CS was recommended for registration.

In the end, a process that had seemed improbable to Woody Wurster had turned into reality in a remarkably brief period, thanks to a combination of commitment, diligence and effort by a solid company team incorporating a common-sense approach to ISO 9001. **QD**

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Benefits:

- AEM Consulting Group streamlined the audit and registration process for Custom Stamping Inc. by combining several ISO 9001 requirements and reducing the company's quality manual.
- The internal audit started early in the registration process, allowing auditor feedback to be incorporated in preparations for the final registration audit team's arrival.

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