

The Hibbert Group

- ***Cost of quality for the company has been reduced by almost 67 per cent***
- ***15 per cent increase in the level of customer satisfaction with order timeliness and responsiveness***
- ***BSI identified performance shortfalls, e.g. on-time delivery of shipments to the company's top ten clients increased from a quarterly average of 90 per cent to an average of almost 100 per cent***

The Company

The Hibbert Group, with headquarters in Trenton NJ, provides comprehensive Marketing services for about 125 customers. Its customers are mainly Fortune 500 companies. Its flagship services are Web-enabled Global Fulfilment, Web-enabled Program Administration and Web-enabled Marketing and Database Management. The company employs 800 people based in two sites, Trenton NJ and Denver Colorado. Both sites are independently registered to ISO 9002 but share a common Human Resources department, Quality Assurance department, IT department and Inventory Management system.

The Hibbert Group serves all market sectors but has a heavy presence in pharmaceuticals, electronics and financial services.

The Issues

The primary driver behind the company seeking ISO 9000 registration was to achieve best in class status allowing it to be a world class provider of marketing services.

It was felt that the ISO registration was an objective way for the company to assure clients of its commitment to providing high quality services and high quality performance.

Another reason for the registration was that the discipline of ISO was a good basis for measuring and improving performance.

The Benefits

Using ISO 9000 standards raised the level of quality consciousness and awareness amongst employees, helping them to focus on understanding and meeting the requirements of Hibbert's customers. It also provided a common quality vocabulary to be used across the whole organisation.

ISO 9000 supported formalising and documenting many procedures and also provided a discipline of error free performance on a continual basis. Processes have been optimised, which led to improved first-pass performance. For example, because of the reduction in waste and re-work/re-processing activities, the cost of quality for the company has been reduced by almost 67 per cent.

It helped raise awareness of customer satisfaction to the firm. Additionally, the customer complaint process has improved, in particular, capturing and resolving of complaints. One year after certification, there has been a 20 per cent reduction in the number of customer complaints. Moreover, the results of the customer satisfaction survey show a 15 per cent increase in the level of customer satisfaction with the two main factors of order timeliness and responsiveness.

Due to the requirement for procedures and employee training records, employee performance has improved by using the documents as a training aid and for identifying training needs. For example, the accuracy level of warehouse pick/pack operations jumped from an average of 95 per cent to an average of 99.75 per cent.

Furthermore, ISO 9000 assisted focussing not merely on performance but performance improvement within processes. On-time delivery of shipments to the company's top ten clients increased from a quarterly average of 90 per cent to an average of almost 100 per cent.

BSI's Role

The Hibbert Group has a client base that operates globally and the hallmark of its quality management system is Global Excellence. Therefore, it was thought as being sensible to use BSI as the largest international ISO registration body and as a company with international experience and focus. It was felt that BSI's reputation of being global blended nicely with The Hibbert Group's Global Excellence theme.

The decision to use BSI as a registration body was supported by its breadth of experience across all industries and The Hibbert Group was looking for a registrar who was familiar with the unique requirements of the services industry. Mr Vince Louison, the company's Quality Director, noted: "My experience is that BSI brings to the table a set of resources that others do not have e.g. a long history of quality standard development and auditors throughout the USA". In addition, he sees BSI not only as a registrar but also as a partner, because BSI is concerned not only with the mechanics of registration but also on improving performance quality and being a partner for continual improvement.

BSI Case Study on the Benefits of ISO 9000 Registration

BSI's guidance throughout the registration and implementation process was as important as its support over the maintenance phase. For example in using a strong internal audit process BSI was able to identify performance shortfalls and brought that to the attention of senior management at the closing meeting. Such feedback was very helpful.

After each audit session, the indications for opportunities for improvement were thought to be very valuable and helpful.

BSI's auditors have always displayed honest interest into the quality of The Hibbert Group's operations. They are actively involved in its operations and activities that enable the company to be world class. This was thought to be valuable because the auditors understand their customer's business, are knowledgeable and accessible.

Equally important is the stability of BSI and the consistency of having always the same auditor. This has the advantage that the auditor has in-depth knowledge of the organisation and can therefore provide better service.

About the System

A unique feature of the quality management system is its web-enabled interface. Being leading edge technology, this web-enabled interface is an important factor for the business, as the services the company provides are technology based. Moreover, The Hibbert Group uses technology as the driving factor in providing service - e.g. the web gives customers access to the inventory system. Therefore, up-time and reliability of the web service are very important requirements. BSI is aware of these issues and actively supporting them.

It is believed, that the new revision of ISO 9000 will help even more in reliability and quality e.g. process mapping, measurement, focus on continuous improvement and renewed emphasis on customer satisfaction.