

BEST PRACTICES

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE THIRD PARTY AUDITS OF THE SYSTEMS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO TÜV CERT REQUIREMENTS

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Abstract

The third party audit of the systems of quality management may be performed by quality auditors, who represent a certain certifying body, fulfilling the rules of good practice provided therein. Being the interface between the certifying body and audited clients / organisations in different fields of activity, the auditors are selected and trained permanently with a view to improve their performance and implicitly the image of certifying body.

The objectives of the article are to present the rules applied within international certifying bodies, from the perspective of that involved directly for almost ten years in this activity, simultaneously with university activity.

With respect to the manner of collecting the information, the article relies on the experience of the author in the capacity of third party auditor, competent in the following fields: education, research, trade, tourism, services.

The practical issues emphasized in the article refer to the rules appropriated by third party auditors within famous international certifying bodies TÜV Rheinland and respectively TÜV Austria, where the author of the article began and respectively carries out his activity currently. Their image and fame is due to the rules of good practice, fulfilled in these certifying bodies for over 130 years.

The article presents the stages of theoretical and practical formation of an auditor, the objectives to be reached on each stage of preparation, what his activity involves within the certifying body, the collaboration with the other auditors, permanent training and experience exchanges during the international conferences organised by certifying bodies, practice of audit, possibility of maintaining as auditor and advancing as chief auditor, the status of third party auditor.

Keywords: quality management, audit, certifying body, standard, training.

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Introduction

In the context of the current preoccupations of implementation, maintenance, improvement and certification of the systems of quality management of organisations, according to the standards of the family ISO 9000, the audit is considered essential for enterprises.

The main purpose of quality audit is to assess objectively: the efficacy of the system of quality management of an organisation, then necessary amendments for the elimination of deficiencies, the amending actions initiated and implemented in organisations in order to remove the causes of non-conformities and the possibilities of improving the quality system of the enterprise, of its processes, of the products and services offered.

The several articles in the field of quality management concern the important theoretical issues of the activities in this field. The quality standards are permanently reviewed and improved. Comparative analyses are performed in order to emphasize the amendments performed. They are published or they are studied in detail in PhD theses, case studies which present the experience of organisations in the implementation and maintenance of the systems of quality management. After each standard edition several books and university courses, as well as application guides are published.

The purpose of this article is to share the practical experience in the field of audit and to prove that third party audits are performed with competence and professionalism, with dedication and diplomacy, needing much knowledge in different fields, professional, of standardization and certification, of psychology.

During the last years, I was asked several questions, especially by my students, concerning the effective activity of third party auditor in the field of the system of quality management and the work manner within the certifying bodies, which is different from case to case, not being encountered in books or standards. Indeed, the rules fulfilled daily by us do not form the object of published articles.

In the purpose of increasing the level of quality of the auditors' preparation, I shall present the main good practices implemented in TÜV Rheinland and TÜV Austria.

1. Preliminary training

IRCA (International Register of Certificated Auditors) and TÜV organize applicative courses, with a relatively short duration, between 24 - 90 hours of training, on different modules. After each module, an exam is passed and the preparation is continued only if the exam was passed.

No student of IRCA and TÜV Academy and IRCA is accepted for preparation, not even on elementary level, if he/she does not prove that he/she is involved in the quality management within an organisation where he/she professes, having thus knowledge about the standards SR EN ISO 9000:2006, with respect to the principles of quality management and the vocabulary used, SR EN ISO 9001:2008, concerning the requirements of the system of quality management and respectively SR EN ISO 19011:2003, concerning the audit. Consequently, the initial rule is to assess the candidates. It is considered a golden, honourable, respectful rule and in agreement with the conditions of quality management. The work teams are very small, up to 11 students. If this figure is exceeded, it is obligatory to divide the group, the students being coordinated by two trainers. Even in this case, it is

emphasized the issue of quality not of quantity, despite the performance of a significant profit.

There are studied: techniques and instruments of quality management, verbal and non-verbal techniques, communication, motivation, as well as statistics, standardization and certification.

The proportion between theory and practice is of 20 % theory and 80% practice, which means the effective performance of audit documentation for the case studies proposed, simulation and scenarios, which are subsequently shot and assessed gradually.

During the hours of training, the students work effectively, stating accurately the topics and the hours assigned for settling these. Each team presents subsequently its results, which are assessed and pointed by trainers. Selected as trainers are the auditors with several audits performed, with wide experience in the field and appreciated in time. The evidence of this appreciation are the effective results visible through the number of auditors trained, selected on their turn to join TÜV team, as well as permanent assessments, after each module, performed by the beneficiaries of courses.

2. Audit practice

After passing the required preparation modules and obtaining a high score which certifies the theoretical preparation and part of the skills of the student, it is passed to the next stage, when, for 18 days, the candidate participates effectively to third party audits and he/she is simultaneously assessed by the leader of audit team.

Each module of practical preparation is pointed and the practice is not continued but if the auditor in course of formation proves capacities and skills for audit.

The activities to be carried out in real time by each auditor in formation are exemplified in table no. 1, for each candidate and each activity carried out by the latter being attached the scores the proper appreciations.

Table no. 1: Exercises to be solved successfully by an auditor in course of formation

Period		Audit exercises
1	Days 1 - 3	Participation to audit (outfit, conduit, punctuality)
2	Days 4 - 7	Drafting the audit documents Study of the documentations of companies to be audited Active participation to audit (for verification of professional competence)
3	Days 8 - 13	Analysis of documentation Drafting the audit plan Drafting the verification lists Active participation to audit
4	Days 14 - 17	Active participation to audit Drafting the audit report Drawing up the audit file to be delivered to certifying office
5	Day 18	Monitoring

Source: schedule of formation of auditors within TÜV Rheinland

The monitoring represents in fact the effective and full audit performed by the auditor in course of formation, in real conditions and before the team manager who assesses him.

Only after the full promotion of these teams it is concluded a contract on determined or undetermined duration with the third party auditor. The appointment as auditor is performed by the manager of certifying body, on a 3 year term, being stated as well the competence fields of auditor, depending on his professional preparation, the studies performed, the professional experience, assessed in years (> 4 years) and projects.

Upon the conclusion of contract, the newly appointed auditor signs an agreement of good practice and confidentiality. Therefore, on each audit carried out, he shall fulfil the rules undertaken and which we shall comment further on.

3. Rules of good practice

The auditor appointed must represent the interests of the certifying body who designated him and not to act in any way which may prejudice its reputation. The rules imposed by certifying body must be respected for each audit, without any difference. If there is any reason which may prejudice the audit, this must be obligatorily communicated. In other words, there must not be represented the competition or conflict interests and the superiors within the certifying body must be informed about any situation which may affect the objectivity of auditors. More than that, the auditor must cooperate in case of an inquiry when it is analysed a presumed breach of this code of good practice.

Each auditor fills in, without ungrounded delays, in the case of all audits required, the full audit documentation, without changing the forms of these: plans of audit, lists of verification and questionnaires, audit protocol, non-conformity reports and audit reports. For each audit registration there is a term during which it must be sent to the certification office and respectively to audited client.

No information related to previous audits shall be delivered. Such information must not be published or sent to other interested parties, but if this was authorised in writing by the audited client / organisation.

No favours, commissions, gifts, advantages may be accepted from the audited organisation, with or without its initiative, from their employees or from any interested party and audit colleagues may be allowed to get involved in such actions. It is reported as well the involvement of some members of auditor's family in consulting activities offered to the organisations where we audit and even potential service contracts concluded between the auditor and the audited person, with maximum two years before scheduling the audit.

The auditor must be responsible and objective, not to communicate false or mistaken information, which may compromise the integrity of an audit. He must assure that there is evidence which support his point of view and he is forbidden to manipulate in any manner the audit, to support his assertions.

It is assigned a higher term to auditing the main processes, which means that the auditors know these well. It is not accepted any exceed of the audit intervals announced by the auditor to audited organisations and documented in the audit plans, for each process or compartment, but with the approval of the representatives of audited organisations. For

each audit it is calculated exactly, within the certifying body, the number of days of audit on site, which cannot be exceeded. This number is calculated in terms of the audited field, the seats to be audited, the number of employees of audited organisation.

The audit team is valuable as a whole and therefore an auditor must help his team colleagues or the auditors in formation supervised by them, to develop their skills in the field of quality management and audit. All auditors must struggle to improve the auditor prestige.

Assessments of auditors are performed periodically: after the certification and supervision audits performed within different organisations, annually, during the meetings of auditors, performed with a view to share experience and to have access to training and to useful and current information, within three years for the assessment of the entire activity and re-acknowledgement on position, through a new decision of appointment as auditor / chief auditor in such body of certification.

Conclusions

The rigorous preparation of auditors and the fulfilment by them of the rules imposed by the certifying body create the premises of some audits which involve the plus value for the audited organisations.

The auditors form team skills, they have accurate objectives, and the results of audit are considered the results of the team and not of a sole individual.

A proof of respect from the certifying bodies for their clients is the inclusion in the audit teams of auditors experienced and competent in the audited fields, respectively the presence of experts with the audit teams.

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