

QUALITY AUDIT AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGY

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Abstract:

Quality management of quality assurance services involves giving a sustained interest to the overall improvement of the quality perceived by customers, offering consumers the guarantee of superior satisfaction. The provision of services in the field of quality audit and certification requires the permanent updating of the activities carried out through the quality management system, improving, developing and innovating the services offered to business customers. The continuous improvement of the quality management system highlights an effective management of the resources owned by the enterprise, measuring, analyzing and constantly improving the quality characteristics attached to the products and services intended for customers. Aiming at maintaining the trust of clients regarding the ability to identify, prevent and treat any possible non-conformities of the activities carried out at the level of an organization, the performance of a quality audit has the role of generating the premises for defining, substantiating and putting into practice the future strategy. The policy in the field of quality management implemented by all organizations aims to increase the prestige acquired by them and maintain notoriety by building an image that reflects excellence, seriousness and competence in the activity carried out. This paper presents theoretical and practical aspects that justify the opportunity of using the results of quality audits in substantiating the organizations' strategies.

Key words: quality audit, quality management, strategy

Classification JEL: M42, L15, L1

1. Introduction

Quality management of quality assurance services involves giving a sustained interest to the overall improvement of the quality perceived by customers, offering consumers the guarantee of superior satisfaction. The provision of services in the field of quality audit and certification requires the permanent updating of the activities carried out through the quality management system, improving, developing and innovating the services offered to business customers.

The motivation of the paper is argued by the personal interest given to the quality management of services provided in the field of audit and quality certification, highlighted as a premise for updating professional knowledge in this field of activity.

According to the information derived from the specialized literature, quality highlights the totality of the characteristics and/or performances recorded in the good or economic service, these characteristics determining the level of satisfaction and compliance expected by real or potential customers (Watson, 2022).

A significant part of contemporary organizations attach great importance to total quality. In order to achieve a continuous improvement of the quality management system, it is appropriate to systematically carry out auditing activities. As a result of these activities, it can be highlighted if all the resources are used through efficient management, and the quality characteristics of the products and services can satisfy the customers' requirements.

The effective performance of a quality audit directly results in the identification and implementation of corrective and preventive activities that have the role of correcting and preventing the occurrence of non-conformities in the future. The management of the organization, through the quality policy, organizes controls and allocates resources for the maintenance and continuous improvement of the quality management system. Compliance and fulfillment of these requirements contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of activities in the organization.

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2. Auditing and quality assurance process

According to the ISO 9001 standard, the product and service quality management system is based on the reasoning that the continuous improvement process of the quality management system has as input elements the requirements of customers and interested parties regarding the quality of products and services and generates as elements of output satisfying these requirements (figure no. 1).

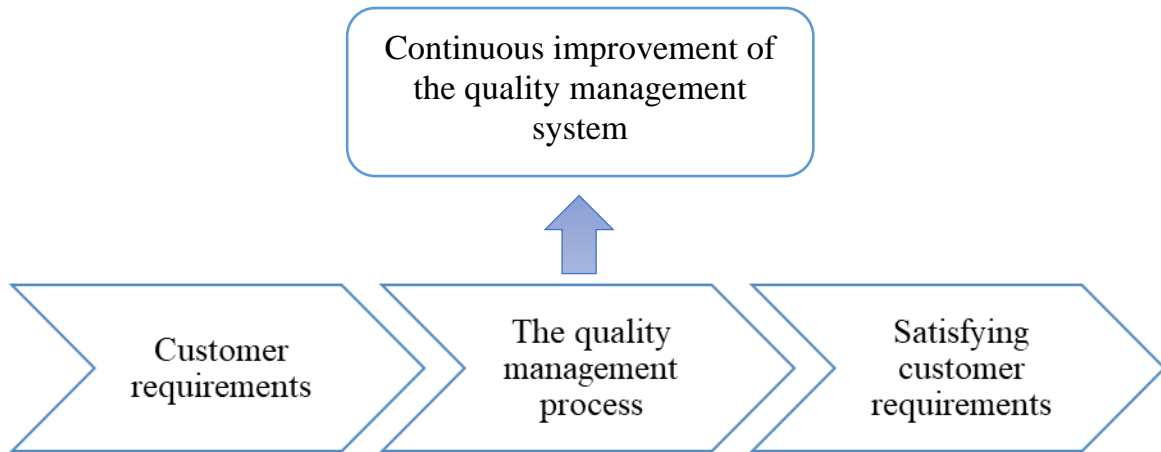


Figure no. 1 Quality management system model according to ISO 9001

The process of continuous improvement of the quality management system is based on and highlights the effective management of the resources owned by the respective organization, measuring, analyzing and constantly improving all the quality characteristics that the products and services must meet in accordance with customer requirements.

The way in which the effectiveness of the quality management system as well as the achievement of quality objectives are monitored is based on internal audits carried out periodically by the top management of the organization to ensure compliance with the adopted principles, effectiveness and continuous improvement of the quality of products and services.

Allocation of resources, planning, control, assurance and continuous improvement of quality and performance are elements of management that the management of the company understands to use with the support and conscious participation of all personnel.

According to the ISO 9000 standard, the audit is considered an essential tool for achieving the organization's objectives, in the field of quality management. The main purpose of the quality audit is to evaluate the functioning of the quality management system.

The quality audit also identifies those corrective actions necessary to eliminate non-conformities and the possibilities for improving the quality management system of the organization as a whole, of the processes, products and services it provides.

According to the international standards specific to the field of audit, the term audit has the meaning of examining the quality of products, services, processes of an organization or the quality management system as a whole.

The main characteristics of the quality audit are those of being systematic and independent. By using the term "systematic" we want to define the fact that the audits will be carried out on the basis of annual plans established by the management of the organization and will be carried out depending on the nature and importance of the activities to be audited. Each organization has the right to establish its own audit plan, in accordance with its own requirements.

The reference to the independence of the audit activity has the meaning of assuring the owner of the audit that it will be carried out by persons whose current activity is totally independent from the activity that will be audited in the framework of the audit to be carried out.

Conducting a quality audit is the process by which:

- the organization's quality management system
- the processes carried out
- the products and services resulting from the processes carried out.

The evaluation is carried out on the basis of reference documents, standards, procedures, quality manuals, various regulations applicable to the audited field.

The quality audit aims to:

- system compliance - is the aspect that identifies whether the procedures established at the level of organizations are respected
- system performance – refers to the verification of the aspect by which compliance with the system procedures leads to the achievement of the objectives and the achievement of the estimated results

The selection of criteria and standards highlights the quality indicators used in the development of the quality audit, being outlined according to the business object of the enterprise (Bezede, 2021).

The essential stages that are followed in carrying out a quality audit are:

1. the initiation of the audit - the stage in which the objective of the audit is established in accordance with the annual plan and the scheduling of the audits
2. audit preparation – the stage in which the audit plan is carried out
3. the actual performance of the audit - includes the opening meeting, the application of the auditing methodology and the closing meeting
4. drawing up the audit report
5. Improvement measures - follow-up of corrective and preventive actions.

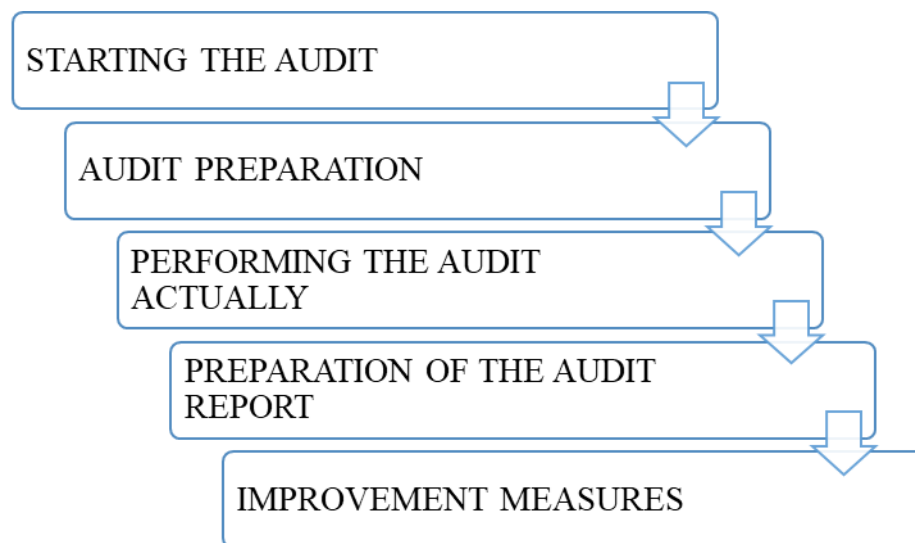


Figure no. 2 Stages of the quality audit

3. Integrating the results of quality audits into the organization's strategy

The policy in the field of quality management implemented at the level of organizations aims to increase the prestige acquired by them and maintain notoriety by building an image that reflects excellence, seriousness and competence in the fields of activity.

With the main goal of maintaining customer confidence in the ability to identify, prevent and treat any possible non-conformities, the implementation, maintenance and improvement of an organization's quality management system is a strategic decision at the management level, integrated into the organization's strategy.

The results of quality audits are manifested by identifying those preventive and corrective actions that will be integrated into the organization's strategy. For this aspect, a

strategy was established for the continuous improvement of the quality of products and services based on the principles of quality management (table 1).

Table no. 1 Aspects of the quality growth strategy

ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY GROWTH STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Customer orientation	By knowing and fully satisfying their requirements and expectations
Quality services provided through modern techniques	By applying the concepts attached to quality management
Improvement continues	Continuous improvement of the quality of services and services provided, through the strategic organization of organizational resources
Involvement of all staff	Training, motivation and engagement

The concrete quality objectives are established annually by the management of the organizations and transmitted for knowledge and implementation to all the functions involved.

The achievement of the objectives is periodically analyzed and the resources and actions necessary to achieve them are determined. To achieve these objectives, a quality management system must be implemented, maintained and continuously improved in accordance with the ISO 9001 standard.

The effectiveness of the management system and the achievement of quality objectives are monitored through independent internal audits and periodically analyzed by the top management of the organization to ensure compliance with the adopted principles, effectiveness and continuous improvement of the quality of the services provided by the company.

Allocation of resources, planning, control, assurance and continuous improvement of quality and performance are elements of management that the management of the organization must use with the support and conscious participation of all personnel.

All these aspects must be included in the overall strategy of the organization. In this way, the entire staff is aware, trained, evaluated and included in all activities.

By integrating the results of quality audits into the organization's overall strategy, management will require all personnel to act to comply with these principles, to produce products and provide services at the highest quality standards.

Ensuring the communication of policies in the field of quality to all interested parties, internal and external, has the role of facilitating the integration of preventive, corrective actions and improvement measures in the future strategy.

The objectives established for the efficiency of the quality management system must be in accordance with the strategic objectives of the organization (table no. 2).

Table no. 2 Illustrative example regarding the objectives of the quality management system

OBJECTIVES TO ACHIEVE	STRATEGY	RESPONSIBLE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR
Customer orientation	Compliance with the terms of delivery of products and services	Project manager	90% compliance with product delivery deadlines
	Increasing the quality of products and services	Project manager	Zero complaints recorded from customers
Improvement continues	Maintain quality management system certification	Project manager	Maintain management system certification in accordance with ISO 9001
Involvement of all staff in training programs	Personal training and motivation	Responsible for human resources	Realization of the training plan
Quality management system	Periodic auditing of the quality management system	Responsible for quality management	Realization of the internal audit plan
New activity development	Attracting new customers	Project manager	Attract rate 5%

The effectiveness of the management system must be verified on site by sampling by an appropriately selected audit team. This applies in particular to the assessment of compliance of activities with the requirements of the reference standards and with the requirements specified by the management system documentation.

The audit objectives stated in the audit plan, specific aspects of the organization's activity, applicable legal and regulatory requirements and requirements specified by other generally applicable documents must be taken into account. The audit is carried out on the basis of a sampling procedure, by conducting interviews and evaluating the applicable documentation.

The application of complex quality management techniques contributes to the achievement of strategic objectives of excellence and dynamism, supports the increase of operational efficiency and the reduction of costs, achieving a balance between the quality of products and services (Militaru, Drăguț, 2014).

The management of the organization, through the quality policy, organizes, controls and allocates resources for the maintenance and continuous improvement of the quality management system. Compliance and fulfillment of these requirements contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of activities in the organization.

3. Conclusions

The implementation, maintenance and improvement of a quality management system based on the international standard ISO 9001 involves the periodic evaluation and auditing of the degree of conformity of the quality management system by a team of auditors.

The concrete quality objectives are established annually by the company's management and transmitted for knowledge and implementation to all the functions involved. The achievement of the objectives is periodically analyzed and the resources and actions necessary to achieve them are determined.

Allocation of resources, planning, control, assurance and continuous improvement of quality and performance are elements of management that the management of the organization understands to use with the support and conscious participation of all staff.

Starting from the results of quality audits, organizations must be able to ensure the maintenance of customer confidence regarding the ability to identify, prevent and treat any possible non-conformity of these activities carried out. Creating a professional interface with customers and ensuring an effective feed-back of information must be integrated aspects in the strategy of any organization that aims to continuously improve the quality management system, in accordance with the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard.

In conclusion, it can be stated that carrying out the quality audit is and must continue to be a priority of the managers of the organizations, regardless of their type and size, so that the aspects resulting from these audits contribute to the adaptation of the strategy in the future.

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