

## **ISO 9001:2000 CERTIFICATION: A MARKETING TOOL**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The support services of Academic Libraries is not just fulfilling the academic requirements of the University but are challenged with the need to prove that they can be equally innovative and adopt changes to realize higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency. The proof of such achievements has to be measured against some form of acceptable fundamental provisions. This paper looks into the efforts by Universiti Sains Malaysia Library in achieving those fundamentals measured against a recognised international standard. This Standard measures the extent of quality service and facilities provided. The criteria is based on the Requirements of ISO9001:2000 and no other Performance Measurement. This must not be confused with ISO Standards for Academic Libraries or ISO Standards for different services of which collection and services are measured against specified ratios. This paper maps the road to enforcement of quality and shows how far these measures have been practiced and maintained. What then is the relationship of these quality practices with Marketing? The ISO 9001:2000 Requirements are the factors that specify how to ensure quality performance and thereby provide indicators of implemented quality performance through Quality Audits. The Audit result which qualifies for certification is thus the key to market our success and proof that the provision of Quality services have been achieved.*

### **PRESENT DAY CHALLENGES**

Academic libraries still have to serve primarily the local academic community where they belong, in particular its students and faculty members in the pursuit of teaching, research, and learning. Each university have their proposed ratios for collection building. However, these are not direct indicators of quality but are merely relative measures that can be evaluated in the context of achieving stated objectives.

With changing technologies, the pressure on libraries is even greater. The advent of electronic and digital information have stretched traditional boundaries of information service to undertake statistical analysis and research in finding out how to justify their usefulness. What is more important is, finding out the performance indicators that enable libraries to use objective data and information for library decision making within a strategic planning framework. These might include new measures or derived measures from existing data such as ratios of volumes per faculty or student.

The Performance indicators must link to strategic management initiatives and may be used to answer questions on performance by both internal and external agencies. One fine example is ensuring accreditation by “Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN) or the National Accreditation Board by proving that we have achieved the proposed and required ratios.

In relation to this accreditation, the adoption of ISO 9001:2000 Standards and successful certification, has further assisted the Library in providing a measure of quality performance because certification proves that the Library has gone through a rigorous regiment of self-analysis, self-inspection and documentation of processes. There is therefore no doubt about the certification’s role as an excellent marketing tool.

### **ISO CERTIFICATION – WHY THE NEED?**

ISO 9000 was developed from the British BS 5750 quality standards and was adapted for wider use in 1987 with the publication of its first edition.. The International Organization for Standardization ( ISO ) is a network of national standards institutes from 146 countries working in partnership with international organizations, governments, industry, business and consumer representatives. It attempts to harmonize voluntary industrial standards to facilitate international trade.

In the bigger picture, ISO connect developing countries and transition economies to state-of-the-art technological know-how enabling them to increase their export capability and competitiveness. As ISO Secretary-General Alan Bryden puts it, “International Standards are an essential tool for facilitating trade, spreading knowledge, and sharing technological advances and good management practice.

Certification to a particular ISO 9000 standard demonstrates a firms’ quality planning, control, assurance, and improvement systems conforming to an internationally agreed format.

Both the ISO standard and the IFLA guidelines emphasize on user satisfaction as a performance indicator. This element has also been used by business management and marketing services as a performance measure.

In relation to this, when organizations speak of recognition it is ISO certification that provide the qualification of an acceptable level of quality product or service. The certification has been an obvious sought after acknowledgement and accreditation amongst many manufacturing and trading businesses because of its universal acceptance.

Service oriented agencies are now in the race for accreditation. Adding to this is the statutory requirement that government agencies (in Malaysia) be assessed for their quality by the end of the year 2003. This is a requirement under the government circular “Pekeliling Kemajuan Perkhidmatan Awam Bil. 2 1996– Garis Panduan Bagi Melaksanakan ISO 9000 Dalam Perkhidmatan Awam.

As a result many universities in Malaysia have successfully achieved certification.

## **WHY UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA LIBRARY ADOPTED ISO CERTIFICATION**

Universiti Sains Malaysia introduced TQM in tandem with the government circular “Pekeliling Kemajuan Perkhidmatan Awam Bil. 1 1992 – Panduan Pengurusan Kualiti Menyeluruh (TQM) Bagi Perkhidmatan Awam. It is also a policy of the University to support any activity towards achieving Quality. The adoption of TQM by the Library was then followed by the adoption of ISO 9000 Quality Management Systems in 1998. This led to training towards understanding of the concepts and objectives of ISO 9000.

### **Appreciating Quality**

While most staff understood the need for Quality products and services, they however could not appreciate the need for ISO certification. This was the most difficult part as we were faced with the initial challenge of making them understand. Management could not see what the staff could not understand. They did not see the benefits of certification because the returns were initially intangible. A committee was then formed to have greater staff involvement so that the experiences of documentation, document control and internal auditing would create greater appreciation. In short, they were made to understand that by adoption of the Standard towards Certification it meant that;

- No one was exempted from following procedures.
- An error of non-conformity to standards would indirectly reflect inefficiency of the staff performing the activity (auditee).

As a result, many did not want to be reflected as a non-conforming person. Non-conformity or NCR (Non-Conformance Report) i.e. there is a need for corrective action. This has become an undesired stigma. In avoiding NCR divisions then began striving to maintain conformity to Standards Requirements. These indirectly resulted in healthy divisional competition for quality performance. This willingness to work together towards pursuing ISO 9000 registration and finally certification provided a platform where there was contribution toward improved quality and thereby competitive advantage.

The staff support for this standard and their commitment to the management system's implementation would thus appear to be indispensable to a successful certification process.

### **Certification Versus Performance Indicators**

Performance Indicators are “policy-relevant statistics produced regularly to support overall policy, planning and monitoring at national, state or system level. The purpose is to provide data that can lead to improvement in educational programmes and student learning. The performance indicator is therefore an important management tool.

***Measures however only provide the yardstick. Whereas, ISO 9001 is Quality Assurance.***

While efforts were being made by IFLA on a framework of indicators, libraries are striving in the struggle to prove the importance of their survival and extension in order to ensure better budget bargains. Therefore some more means of proof need to be produced to measure the extent of quality services. However, many libraries are not able to fully realize these indicators due to some limiting factors. This is not only true for the case of academic libraries but for all other types of libraries.

The growing emphasis by the government on ISO accreditation thus provided the right answer. This accreditation has therefore been recognised as one of the strategies in promoting quality.

### **ISO 9001:2000 AS A MARKETING STRATEGY**

Since the 80's, marketing of information services has become an important element amongst all types of libraries due to competition from other information providers. Libraries were therefore obliged to follow some marketing strategy as part of the general strategic plan with its mission and goals. Marketing not only reflects innovation but, the development of new products and services. At the same time, it also reflects the qualitative side whereby products and services are being adapted to fulfill customers needs.

In implementing ISO 9001:2000 the Library or any other organization has to adopt the strategies and techniques of the business world. The terms used under this standard reflects so, for e.g. marketing, public relations, information resources, intellectual property, managers, and customers. All Requirements under the Standard apply and correlate with business strategies and approaches. This is reflected in the Requirements as specified by the Clauses of the ISO 9001:2000 Standard.

Some obvious examples are Clauses that relate to customer needs, and continual improvement as in Clause 7.2 and Clause 8

#### *Responsiveness to client needs and demands (Clause 7.2 –Customer Related Processes)*

The basic idea of marketing is that responsiveness to client needs and demands is the key to success. To accomplish this it is obligatory that the library as a whole is oriented towards the systematic collection of information about its users. A high-responsive organization is intensely interested in information about the needs, perceptions and presuppositions, preferences and relative satisfaction of customers with respect to the services offered. User-friendliness will come automatically with an attitude that strives at adapting services to the real needs of library users.

In this connection when some services, facilities and products become obsolete, they must be replaced by new ones. Products have a life-cycle and will disappear at the end of

it. An example is the use of printed indexing and abstracting journals that has been slowly supplemented by Electronic Databases. These needs require justification to convince upper management that we need that continual improvement and change. With the presence of ISO certification, upper management is therefore obliged to fulfill Clause 8.5.1 (Continual Improvement) and thereby provide the financial support required.

#### *Statistical Data Analysis (Clause 8.4- Analysis of Data )*

Performance measurement identifies quality with the successful attainment of quantifiable goals. Various techniques exist to evaluate outputs or outcomes of library services. This measurement also help in locating deficiencies, and in this way implicitly is the source for improvement.

### **WHAT MAKES ISO CERTIFICATION A MARKETING TOOL**

The standard has been developed by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) which is a federation of national bodies that recognizes it to be a tool for companies to increase productivity, decrease cost and improve quality. It is therefore a recognized method of quality improvement which is universally accepted. Among others, the obligatory elements to be fulfilled provide further convincing elements for performance measures. These include:-

- **Ensuring Best Practices**  
The purpose of ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System (QMS) is to provide businesses and organizations with a model to grow systematically while assuring the quality of their products and services. As an Academic Library the adoption of the Standard has made it easier for us to present the value of the Library within the organization (university) in a business approach.

Since ISO has some basic requirements or criteria that must be fulfilled, it becomes a tool for measuring achievement which is rewarded by Certification. This certification would then translate into having the standard of best practices expected of Quality Management Systems. We are therefore reflecting a Library with best practices

- **Provision for Customers Complain**

Provisions for receiving customers complains are mandatory. Customers know their rights to complains and their rights to respective corrections and improvements. There is a stated process whereby the root cause of the problem or issue must be identified. In addition there is a specified time frame for action to be taken.

- **Measurement of Customer Satisfaction**

A survey must be in place to measure customer satisfaction of various activities. When customers realize this they are happy and more satisfied that their views are taken into consideration.

Since the ISO standard is seen as a system of objective, collectively accepted rules, its legitimacy is rarely challenged by organizations. It is therefore evident from the above elements that our adoption of ISO 9001:2000 have had positive effects on our performance.

### **Marketing for Improved Supplier Relationships**

The popularity of ISO 9000 accreditation has made it an increasingly required achievement for increased market access because under market globalization a common international standard is necessary to foster easier and better trade.

While the standard is very much customer-focused we should not overlook the fact that there is an area where the element (Clause 7.4) for our suppliers is of equal importance. A good relationship with suppliers is one of the basis for assured delivery of products and services because the input to our processes starts with suppliers.

ISO 9000 certification is increasingly used as a selection tool by suppliers and to improve their image and competitiveness. The certification have thus become a marketing-driven certificate based on management practices intended to integrate quality into the daily management of organizations.

Whatever the situation or reason, it has benefited both the Library and the supplier. This mutually beneficial supplier relationships especially if both are ISO certified, ensures that any eminent issues or problems would be amicably solved. This is a definite marketing for the Library to have reliable suppliers and vice-versa. If it is just the Library that is certified, it would still benefit us, as, suppliers are more confident with our quality practices as a result of the general structured framework for the integration of basic quality management practices and the verification of their application.

The principle "we say what we do, we do what we say," is at the heart of the implementation process. It reflects work processes and the underlying power relationships.

The outcome of suppliers confidence would mean that the Library will receive timely supplies be it books, journals and many other resources. Having the right input at the desired time thus make provision of facilities and the delivery of information resources to customers more efficient. This established relationships balance short-term gains with long-term considerations. The standard therefore has had a positive impact on our practices

The development of ISO 9000 thus makes it possible to cultivate a common TQM language and tools for use by organizations.

### **Successful Marketing by Default**

A successful certification audit generally receives a great deal of publicity, whether it be through newspapers, business cards, banners outside certified facilities. It is an accepted fact that organizations would attempt to conform in their words and actions once Certification is awarded. The image that is projected outside the organization tends to reinforce this quest for identity.

Once again, customers become more confident with their expected services and facilities and know that they can demand based on the specified Quality Objectives.

It cannot be denied that there are organizations that develop quality manuals just in keeping with the standard's instructions whereas the documentation was rarely consulted except to be strictly applied and updated during audit periods. In short they put ISO on the shelf between audits. From observations of such organizations, they do not last the successive Audits.

The literature on ISO have stated that some organizations consider The ISO 9000 system as more than a marketing tool. They believed the standard provided a structured approach to implementing effective and proven quality assurance principles, including procedure documentation and monitoring, operation traceability, error reduction, client communication, and after-sales service. Besides its commercial advantages, adopting this system provided an excellent way of promoting total quality in the workplace:

Whether or not the certification is beneficial, is really subjective. It depends on the way the system is implemented, and particularly requires the employees support and mobilization. They must, above all, be convinced of the system's relevance

When the system is well set up and people believe in it, the work methods and product quality improve. It's the personnel's involvement and motivation that makes the difference.

Whether or not libraries should adopt ISO depends on the intention. It would be easily achieved if libraries are motivated by the practice's intrinsic effectiveness.

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