

Australian Printer
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Does my business need an EMS?

Sounding anything short of a medical condition, an EMS may possibly be what your business needs...

Quality in goods and services is something each of us as consumers have come to expect. For years company's have had quality systems in place either formally (ISO9000) or informally. Today the expectation that a company provides it's good or service in an environmentally friendly way is also high on the agenda.

As with any formal management system a number of questions need to be asked, primarily, is it worth the time, and money to set an Environmental Management System? What are it's benefits? What are the pitfalls. To implement a change within any organisation, a company must have clear long term goals in sight as taking short cuts is neither, feasible or appropriate.

There are some very good reasons for taking the greener option. Not only is there the opportunity to reduce environmental impact but also to cut costs. By implementing even the most simplest of EMS, it can demonstrate in a very tangible way where saving can be made in relation to energy and waste. A good EMS also focuses on areas such as legislation and so reduces the risk of prosecution by ensuring that the relevant laws are addressed and perhaps even being one step ahead. This demonstrates both to the end user and also the employees of such a company that they are responsible and show foresight.

One of the most compelling reasons is that our customers are asking for it. Price and product quality drive purchasing requirements. However, purchasers may impose additional conditions when the product will bring environmental/EHS issues into the plant, a supplier's environmental practices might delay delivery or undermine quality, or a supplier's questionable environmental reputation might affect the customer.

A relatively recent phenomenon regarding global environmental priorities, the private sector and large multinational businesses in particular, have introduced voluntary environmental management initiatives and some are now looking to more formal methods such as ISO14001. Studies have shown that voluntary corporate initiatives for global environmental management are consistent with good business practice and to sustainable industrial development. Thus being the case clients are increasingly looking at their suppliers environmental management systems.

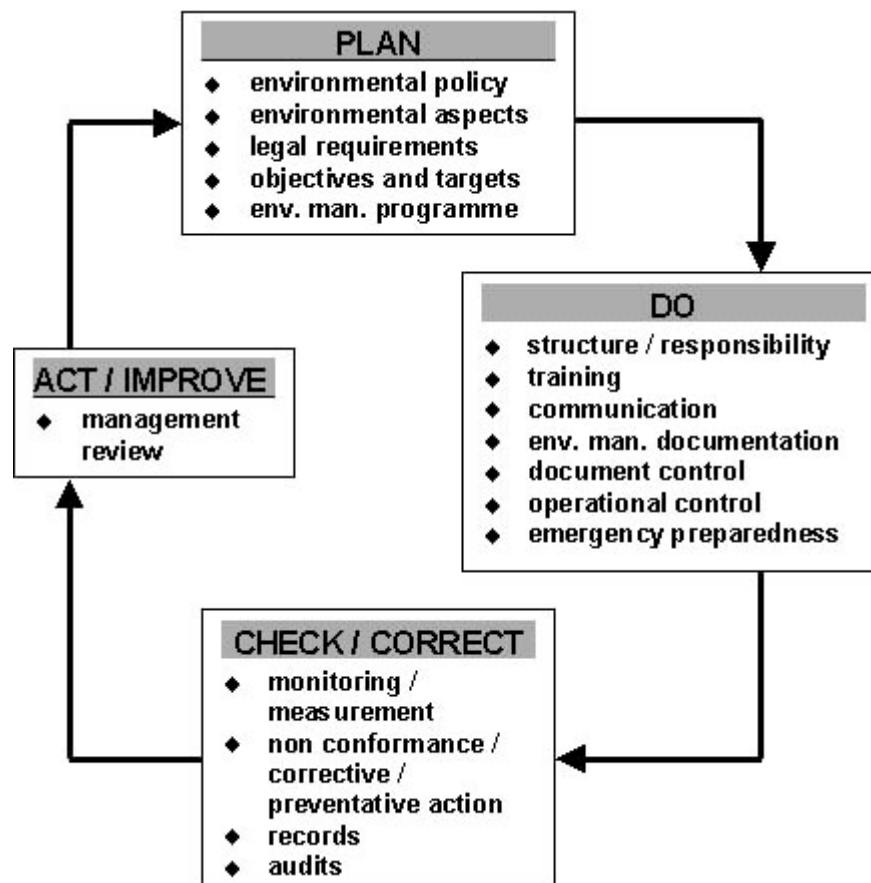
Recently there has been debate whether a company should have an EMS or a formal recognition (ISO 14001) of one. A survey carried out in the U.S. found that most firms interested in the subject of greening the supply chain are not considering ISO 14001 as their instrument of choice. However some are sending mixed signals, such as the Bank of America which like many firms intends to buy a greater percentage of recycled paper in an attempt to reduce its negative environmental impact and develop markets for recycled paper despite not being ISO14001 certified it does ask suppliers if they are.

The purpose of ISO 14001 is to create a standardized methodology for environmental management systems and includes provisions regarding a "commitment to compliance with applicable regulations". These obviously vary from industry to industry and from company to company. For example, two printing companies, their policy could inevitably be quite different from each other and therefore printers are customizing ISO 14001 to fit their specific operational needs.

Taking this into consideration, making the decision to have an EMS should be very clear, however to what extent is still very debatable especially when considering the costs. However once the decision but become greener has been made and the company does not have a current EMS in place where do you start? The best way to tackle this is to sit down and set out the following:

- Undertake an initial environmental review;

- Define an environmental policy;
- Develop an environmental action plan and define environmental responsibilities;
- Develop internal information and training courses;
- Audit the environmental management system and conduct an environmental management review.



As supply chain management becomes more complex in today's procurement processes, supplier environmental management will become more important to assure environmental compliance, to build awareness for continuous cost and environmental improvement opportunities, to minimize business risks and liabilities, and to support long-term growth. With this in view, what is your business doing?