

ISO 9001 - Your Management Representative (5.5.2)

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As part of ISO 9001:2008 (clause 5.5.2), the standard requires that Top Management appoint a member of management to serve as the Management Representative for the organization's Quality Management System.

Expanding upon this requirement, we can consider this appointment to include the responsibility and authority to manage, monitor, evaluate and coordinate the organization's quality management system as necessary to meet customer and other requirements and to achieve specified quality objectives. This individual would also then be responsible for communicating with Top Management, as well as the customer and other interested parties on matters pertaining to the organization's quality management system (see ISO 9004:2000 also).

This appointment is typically documented by Top Management (e.g., President, CEO, COO, etc.) in the form of an appointment letter or other similar written statement; however direct reference within the organization's quality manual is an equally acceptable method. In the later case, the responsibility and authority is not delegated to a particular individual, but rather to a particular position/title within the organization's management structure, which is then assumed by an individual when they are assigned to this particular role.

Specifically, as stated within the ISO 9001 standard, the responsibilities of a Management Representative are as follows:

- Ensure that the processes needed for the organization's QMS are established, implemented, and maintained;
- Report to top management on the performance of the QMS to Top Management and any need for improvement;
- Ensure the promotion of awareness of customer requirements throughout the organization; and
- Act as liaison with external bodies and customers on matters relating to the organization's quality system.

While these responsibilities are defined within the standard, they are by no means all-inclusive. The actual scope of the Management Representative's responsibility will undoubtedly vary from organization to organization, as each organization will have its own unique needs as determined by its size, the scope and the complexity of its operations, and other factors.

It's important to note here, with regards to the responsibilities stated above, the use of the terms "ensure" and "report", and the absence of any reference to the actual (hands-on) development, implementation and on-going maintenance of the management system itself. For these activities, it is the responsibility of the organization to define the individual who is responsible; in some organizations, it may be the Management Representative, or it may be assigned to other personnel within the organization.

While ISO 9001 does require that the Management Representative to be a member of management, no guidance is provided on the actual selection process, particularly with regards to the skills, knowledge and or abilities that are desirable. Again, this is left to Top Management



of the organization, as they must ensure that the individual selected has the traits necessary to ensure that the outcomes desired by the organization are met.

The process of selecting a Management Representative should consider the responsibilities that this individual will assume and the role they will play in the actual management of the organization and its activities. For large organizations, this will require a degree of management "savvy", the ability to interact with key decision-makers as well as make key decisions, the ability to ensure conformance and to drive change. For smaller organizations, the management representative may be required to take a more hands-on approach, handling not only management issues related to the QMS, but also being directly involved in the administrative functions that make up this system and keep it running.

An understanding of the requirements specified by the ISO 9001 standard is obviously necessary; however a deep level of subject matter expertise may only be necessary if the individual is going to actively manage the day-to-day activities and functions associated with the organization's management system. Regardless of the capacity in which the Management Representative will function, competency is the keyword.

As a final note, you may have realized that I never mentioned the position of Quality Manager (or similar title) in this article. There's no reference or requirement in the ISO 9001 standard regarding this position. A Management Representative is a required by the ISO 9001 standard; having an individual assigned as Quality Manager is not – it is a choice made by the organization, based on resource needs and other factors, including the products and services offered and the degree of control that is required. For small organizations, there's often little value obtained by adding additional head-count, as the duties required to maintain and administer a system can be shared amongst existing personnel. For larger organizations however, the level of activity is much greater, and often necessitate this position, or similar, to ensure compliance with specified requirements.

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