

ISO 44001 update

The evolution of a friend: ISO 44001



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ISO 44001 is now approaching the fifth anniversary of its issue in March 2017 and, in preparation for this, ICW has been reviewing opportunities for improvement of this ground-breaking standard.

ISO 11000, as it was initially defined, was a new breed of standard for ISO, providing both the framework for a management system and, more importantly, a business transformation programme. Tentatively, ISO established a project committee (PC) that was not intended to have a life beyond the development of this one standard. Thus, the PC commenced development of a full stand-alone document, with requirements, notes and basic guidance. It was only later, with the acceptance of the draft standard and feedback on the management of the PC, that prolongation of its life was proposed and accepted – with the PC becoming a fully-fledged technical committee (TC). And, due to a numbering protocol error, a change to the now established ISO 44001.

With the acceptance of a longer life for the PC/TC, it became possible to formulate more comprehensive guidance to support the requirements standard – this was *not* carte-blanche from ISO. However, the issue of ISO 44001 attracted wider international interest in the TC. Thus, ISO 44002 was developed by a wider and more active group of experts to provide:

a summary of the intent of each clause, an explanation of why it is relevant, and guidance on the implementation of its requirements.

The opportunity for change

With its issue in 2019, ISO 4002 superseded much of the guidance and part of the appendices of ISO 44001. This provided us with a potential scope for improvement of the original standard.

The launch of ISO 44002 and new members of the TC also provided an impetus to the wider development of the ISO 44001 family, resulting in the evolution of guidance standards based upon the themes and structures established in the original “parent” standard. Particular interest has been shown in the “principles” that run through ISO 44001 and ISO 44002, which are being applied more widely and in non-traditional sectors, sometimes as a stepping-stone to the full standard.

Whilst the early success of ISO 44001 and the recruitment of other nations to the TC is most welcome, this has, perhaps, also set practical limits upon the changes that might be proposed. For example: if major changes are made to the “parent” standard,

such as removal or reordering of the eight stages, changes would need to be made to other members of the ISO 44001 family, which would have to be phased in over several years. Such structural changes are unlikely to be welcomed by ISO, participants in the TC, and other organisations internationally, that have made significant investments in relationships and systems based upon the current framework.

Potential changes

Thus, ICW is currently reviewing suggestions for evolution of the “parent” standard which may be proposed to the TC. Current suggestions focus upon:

- providing an introduction to the wider ISO 44001 family
- the addition of references to the principles in ISO/TR 44000 and guidance in ISO 44002
- removal of guidance that was superseded by ISO 44002 (which is quite voluminous)
- clarification of particular principles/themes, such as communication, risk and exit strategy, as they evolve through the eight-step model
- identification of additional linkages to and from the common management system clauses (aka the high-level structure or the (superseded) Annex SL) to aid integration with other management systems standards, such as ISO 9001
- identification of clauses where wording could be clearer

These are suggestions only, as other nations’ delegations will have views on what should or should not be included, sometimes trenchantly held, to enable ISO 44001 to be of value in their national or industrial context.

The TC is expected to meet in mid-July when, following a ballot of national standards committees, it will decide whether to confirm, revise or withdraw this ground-breaking standard. We look forward to a positive response! ■