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How to Choose Your
ISO 9001 Implementation
Approach

The Best Implementation Approach Depends on Your Organization

Determining the ideal ISO 9001 implementation approach for your organization might not be as clear cut as "our budget doesn't allow for a consultant so we use a certification kit". Some companies might have a large budget yet find it beneficial to implement ISO in-house, while others might choose to increase their budget in order to reap the benefits of quick certification.

There are several different approaches to ISO 9001 certification, each with its own pros and cons. The four most popular approaches are:

1 Doing It Alone
Do it all in-house without outside help

2 ISO 9001 Consultant
Engage an external consultant who does much of the work

3 Certification Kit
Do it yourself with the support of a guided certification kit

4 The Hybrid Approach
Mix and match the different approaches

The most appropriate approach depends on several factors:

- ✓ Your budget
- ✓ The timeframe available or desired to gain the certification
- ✓ The availability of staff
- ✓ The level of knowledge and expertise already existing within your organization
- ✓ The corporate culture and receptiveness to change
- ✓ Your long-term goals for sustainability of the ISO 9001 quality system

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Pros and Cons

Each approach has its own pros and cons. For each consider the importance for your particular organization.

Do It Alone

Pros:
- Least expensive approach
- High chance the QMS reflects the way the business operates
- High chance of long-term ownership by employees

Cons:
- Slowest approach
- Requires great amount of staff time
- Can be sabotaged by uncooperative managers
- Can be difficult to get started and/or maintain momentum

ISO 9001 Consultant

Pros:
- Fastest route to certification
- Requires only minimal staff time
- External authority helps in case of uncooperative managers
- Overcomes difficulties with startup and/or momentum

Cons:
- Most expensive approach
- Can result in a QMS that doesn't reflect the way the business operates
- Can result in low ownership by employees

Certification Kit

Pros:
- Inexpensive
- Can be rather fast
- Good chance the QMS reflects the way the business operates
- Good chance of long-term ownership by employees

Cons:
- Requires staff time
- Can be sabotaged by uncooperative managers
- Can be difficult to get started and/or maintain momentum

The Hybrid Approach

Pros:
- Pick exactly what you need
- Can counteract uncooperative managers
- Can overcome difficulties with startup and/or momentum

Cons:
- More expensive than using a Certification Kit alone

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A Decision-Making Tool

We designed this decision-making tool so that easy decisions can be made quickly without spending resources on unnecessary analysis.

Step 1 — Consider Cost and Budget

For some organizations, there is a set budget that cannot be exceeded, while other organizations apply a more flexible approach and set the budget depending on expected benefits or return on investment. In either case, it's useful to understand the costs first.

Using an ISO 9001 Consultant starts at about USD 15,000 while the Certification Kit is only about USD 2,000. Visit **9001Simplified.com** for details depending on your employee count.

Please note that having the budget for a consultant doesn't mean having to hire one.

Question:

Could we - if necessary - set our budget high enough to use an ISO 9001 Consultant?

Quick Decision:

If it's impossible, exclude the ISO 9001 Consultant from further considerations.

Step 2 — Consider Urgency

The urgency with which your organization needs to achieve ISO 9001 certification is often dependent on external forces, most commonly, on potential customers who require certification as a prerequisite. In other cases, internal issues create urgency, like for example, the need to reduce rework.

Often it's possible to attach a monetary value on certification by a specific due date. For example, you might be able to close a particular deal if your company is certified.

Question:

How important is ISO 9001 certification by a specific due date?t?

Quick Decision:

If it's business-critical to get certified within 3 months, the ISO 9001 Consultant is the best option.

Step 3	Consider Internal Resources

Each implementation approach requires some internal resources but the differences are significant. Resource requirements include the time spent by the implementer as well as by staff and managers applying the ISO system.

Using an ISO 9001 Consultant requires minimal resources on your side, possibly as little as 20-40 hours while offering the opportunity to learn from the expert.

Doing It Alone is at the opposite end of the spectrum, requiring at least 1500-2000 hours of employee time.

Using a Certification Kit drastically reduces the required resources to as little as 200-300 hours.

The Hybrid Approach can reduce the resources needed to tackle (expected) problems.

Question:

Can we free up enough internal resources?

Quick Decision:

If you can't burden your organization with additional responsibilities, the ISO 9001 Consultant will be your only option.

Step 4	Consider Your Capabilities

Some organizations already employ one or more individuals who are also familiar with ISO 9001. Setting up an ISO 9001 system, however, requires more than an understanding of the requirements. Without experience in implementation and project management, even an expert in ISO 9001 requirements will likely spend much time with trial and error.

Question:

Do we have people in our organization with experience in ISO 9001 implementation?

Quick Decision:

If you don't have at least one individual who is both familiar with the standard and experienced in implementation, exclude the Do It Alone approach.

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If you haven't been able to make a decision based on the previous steps, proceed with a cost-benefit analysis.

Question 1:

Is it worthwhile to use an ISO 9001 consultant?

Decision:

Weigh the potential benefits of fast certification against the cost of full-service consultancy. Put a monetary value on the benefits of certification by a specific date (ability to close sales, elimination of operational problems...).

Question 2:

How much internal resources should be used?

Decision:

Add the cost of using internal resources to the price of each approach and compare. Consider that in some cases additional responsibilities can be added without affecting the cost to the organization, while full-time assignments incur costs far above the net salary.

Question 3:

Do we have a situation that's most efficiently addressed by an outside consultant?

Decision:

Try to put a monetary value on the delays caused by specific problems and compare to the cost of consultancy addressing them (for example, a half-day remote consulting, gap analysis and implementation planning...).

Want more expert advice on successfully implementing ISO 9001?

Contact us now and let our experts evaluate your situation.

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