



Construction company achieves 34% annual growth as a result of new contracts won through certification

Customer needs

- Improved access to better business opportunities and inclusion in more tendering exercises
- Reduced risk through process improvements, auditing practices and quality control
- Improved brand reputation and stakeholder confidence

Customer benefits

- Reduction in costs of 5-10%
- Improved market access at both subcontractor level and more importantly principal contractor
- Compliance benefits – early warning of procedural difficulties

“Being associated with a super brand has nothing but a positive effect. When clients see you are certified to international management system standards, they invariably ask who with? When one replies BSI there is a subtle acknowledgement of people knowing you have gone about it properly with a market leader.”

Jack Bowie, QSHE Director



Customer background

DB Construction (DB) is a key player within the construction industry with a particular focus on civil engineering, substructure works, highway works and ground works. DB works with a diverse range of public and private sector clients and fulfils the role of principle contractor for local authorities including Essex County Council, Basildon District Council and the Highways Agency. As subcontractor the company has worked continuously on the Essex Highways Maintenance and Improvements Framework. DB values certification to demonstrate transparency of its operations and accountability for all works undertaken by the organisation. Currently registered to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, work is also underway towards gaining certification to BS OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management.

Why certification

"In order to maintain our average yearly growth rate of 34%, we are committed to increasing our work with existing clients and strategically chosen new clients," says Jack Bowie, QSHE Director. "We understood that becoming ISO certified in several key areas of our business was not so much a choice rather a necessity. Today certification is a primary requirement for competing in some Pre-Qualification Questionnaires and Invitation To Tenders. It enables an organisation to demonstrate its commitment to quality and environmental management. This is particularly important for local authority projects."

Implementation

The first challenge faced by DB was to choose a certification body. Cost was a key consideration and BSI was certainly not the

cheapest. Competency however was the priority and having received a visit from an industry expert with a sound experience of ISO standards, the company made a decision to use BSI. Furthermore being associated with a business super brand could only add to DB's commercial credibility.

"To kick the project off BSI conducted a gap analysis," says Bowie. "This provided us with a platform to understand what we were doing well and identify areas which required work. We met with all our site-based employees to explain the reasons for wanting to implement such systems. It was the openness and transparency that we adopted throughout the entire process both internally and externally with clients that allowed us to embed the management systems without major issue or compromise to business activities."

DB's journey to certification required commitment across the organisation. Creating audit plans, corrective and preventive actions in a structured way seemed logical, however these things had always been done before but were not formally documented. "We handled the whole process internally so it did take time and effort – particularly as none of us had had any ISO training prior to this experience," says Bowie. "The effort to reward ratio though is great, and the new framework gives substance to the practices we already knew were there."

Benefits of working with BSI

DB has found that having independently verified management systems in place has bolstered client confidence in works being completed right first time. Long term benefits are already obvious and include greater client satisfaction, more projects for

the organisation and a happy workforce that are secure in the knowledge that the company strives always to be better, for all stakeholders.

"The point that I don't think can be stressed too strongly is the worth of having assessors who intimately know the industry you work in," states Bowie. "BSI evidently understands how our business works and can therefore see the benefit that is to be derived from the standards for us. By managing our business more effectively we have significantly improved our market access at both subcontractor level and more importantly principal contractor and been able to maintain a challenging annual growth target of 34%. This is particularly impressive in light of the current economic climate.


Certification gives us a clear competitive advantage," he continues. "We have reduced costs by approximately 5-10% and by striving for continuous improvements we have been able to innovate and use new technology such as our Hand-e-pix system. This investment allows us to work in a unique way in terms of logging and recording information of works and communication channels with clients. We believe we are the only private SME in the area to be operating this system."

"Implementing management systems has allowed us to better document the processes and procedures we already had in place but that isn't enough," concludes Bowie. "If you achieve all your targets in 12 months then they were either wrong or not progressive enough. In my mind it is important for a company to always be nearly there and never quite there – this is the philosophy of continual improvement in my eyes."

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