

How BSI Excellerator improves information and enhances the performance of quality management systems



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Lau Vlaar,
Quality Manager, Colas Limited

Customer objectives

- Highlight quality management strengths and weaknesses
- Reinforce management information
- Inform board decision-making
- Maximize system standards performance

Customer benefits

- Clear identification of quality non-conformities
- Reassurance on overall quality management rigour
- Benchmarked systems across industry sector
- Morale boost from excellent results
- Strengthened management information
- Assured decision-making
- Enhanced system standards performance
- Identified potential for further improvement

Customer background

Colas is a progressive far reaching company working to deliver intelligent solutions for the development and maintenance of the nation's road and air infrastructure. The company's strength and expertise is based both on its long history – it was founded in 1926 – and also on being part of the international Colas Group (owned by French multinational Bouygues), which acquired it in 1995.

Based near Crawley in West Sussex, Colas has over 20 offices and depots across the UK and around 1700 employees, including those working in joint venture arrangements. With a sales turnover approaching £300m, it delivers services to a diverse range of clients, including the Highways Agency, the Ministry of Defence, TfL, local authorities and numerous private sector companies.

Why BSI Excellerator?

Colas has a strong track record of achieving certification to key management system standards. It first gained ISO 9001 in quality management some 25 years ago and has since achieved certification to various national highway sector schemes based on this globally respected standard. It has also benefited from ISO 14001 in environmental management, BS OHSAS 18001 in health and safety management, and ISO/IEC 17025, the main standard used by testing and calibration laboratories. In addition, the company is proud to be a Gold level accredited Investor in People and 5 Star recognized for excellence (R4E), which is based on the EFQM Excellence model.

Lau Vlaar, Colas' Quality Manager, is responsible for the task of administering the company's quality standards, with the key objective of maximizing the benefits that can be derived from them. In 2013, Vlaar took the opportunity to trial BSI Excellerator, to see if the information that the report provided could assist him.

As Vlaar explains, Colas was no stranger to the challenge of analyzing its quality management performance. "We already had well-developed strategic performance indicators within Colas – we're actually quite far ahead in our industry. But we were curious to see if Excellerator came up with the same results and we also

BSI Excellerator

wanted to benchmark our processes against other businesses."

Benefits

In the event, BSI Excellerator provided reassurance to Vlaar about the effectiveness of Colas' quality management systems.

Primarily, the report reinforced the company's existing knowledge of areas where its performance was falling short of the required standard. "BSI Excellerator highlighted the causes of most of our non-conformities. It clarified them and enabled us to prioritize the issues we needed to address," says Vlaar. "In common with most companies, we had two or three areas where extra effort was necessary, and we were able to use the report's findings in bringing these improvement areas to the attention of the board."

With information presented clearly using BSI Excellerator's impressive graphics, the report enabled Colas' board members to focus on areas of lower performance, ultimately helping them to boost company performance.

But the report did not just point out weaknesses. It also showed where Colas' quality management systems were performing well, providing morale-boosting reassurance, as well as indicating how further improvements could be made. Crucially, BSI Excellerator enabled the company to benchmark its results against data aggregated by BSI from other organizations in its industry.

"From a base of 7,500 quality non-conformities recorded by BSI across our industry, it showed we are actually performing three times better than the sector average, so that put a smile on our faces," says Vlaar.

He continues, "We have a continuous improvement culture and we tend to be very self-critical. Sometimes we kick ourselves unjustifiably when we should be praising ourselves – we're actually doing a good job, and the report helped us to communicate this positive news to the board and senior management."

BSI Excellerator in practice

When it came to interpreting BSI Excellerator's results, Vlaar was cautious at first. "I didn't blindly accept the data in the report," he says. "First, I had to make sure I understood it and then I compared it to our

own performance management data. When I found they were in line it reassured me and gave me confidence in the findings."

Whilst Vlaar points out that, at Colas, "we've identified non-conformities for years, so the report is not so different to what we are already doing," he appreciates the clarity and practicality of BSI Excellerator's format, adding, "I think it could be quite an eye-opener for some companies".

Why BSI

It was BSI that first suggested Colas might benefit from Excellerator and it has remained a supportive partner throughout the process of compiling and using the tool. BSI carried out an initial assessment to collect key performance data. Its expert analysts then benchmarked Colas' performance, producing company 'scores' and sector averages to enable Colas to identify areas of over and under performance.

Vlaar maintains a good dialogue with BSI, which he believes could bring Colas further benefits in future. As well as offering continued performance information and analysis of the company's quality management system, perhaps through an annual BSI Excellerator report, he is open to the idea of applying the powerful tool to the company's other management systems. In addition, he foresees the prospect of detailed performance comparisons between Colas' different sites, as well as drawing on BSI's extensive audit database to benchmark the company's performance against businesses outside its own sector.

In summary, Vlaar is impressed by BSI Excellerator and sees significant further potential for it. "I'm looking forward to the next steps with BSI to improve our performance further," he concludes.

Next steps

Find out how BSI Excellerator can help your business make excellence a habit – visit bsigroup.com