

● A guide to BS 99001

Quality Management Systems
Specific requirements for the
built environment sector

A BSI executive briefing



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Overview

The British Standard BS 99001 is a built environment sector specification document aimed at clarifying and enhancing the generic requirements of ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems to suit the specific challenges of the built environment sector in the UK.

This standard will direct organizations involved in projects, large and small, to apply the requirements of ISO 9001 in a way that recognizes the project-based nature of the sector, and the need for flexibility and agility in effectively meeting quality management requirements. This standard takes into account the multi-discipline and multi-stakeholder environment that is unique for each project, and the direct relation between quality in delivering a built asset and society's demands towards safety, reliability and the long-term sustainability of built assets.

This British Standard is similar in concept to other industry-specific quality management standards such as Aerospace and Petrochemical, which were introduced in recent years and have been welcomed by the respective sectors, organizations and their customers.

Who is BS 99001 for?

This standard is aimed at organizations operating in the built environment sector in the UK. It must be stressed that this does not exclusively mean quality managers but also includes middle to senior level and top management roles – any of those who make decisions that influence the design, construction and use of built assets.

Organizations acting as clients, contractors and designers will find this standard particularly useful, as it will help them set out governance mechanisms for projects in a way that will stimulate all interested parties involved in design and construction to collaborate efficiently, putting quality, safety and sustainability of built assets at the top of the priority ladder.

For organizations integrated into project supply chains, this standard will provide a practical framework on the expectations of their customers towards materials, components and the services that they provide, and how suppliers can best achieve customer satisfaction.



The benefits of using the standard

While ISO 9001 is an internationally accepted benchmark for quality management systems for any organization in any sector, it is acknowledged that its requirements are purposefully generic and can be interpreted in many ways. This British Standard clarifies and specifies some of the key requirements of ISO 9001 for parties involved in the built environment sector, spanning the whole life cycle of a built asset.

The decision to align an organization's management system to this British Standard will clearly demonstrate the organization's commitment to providing a superior level of service to their customers and to wider society.

The additional requirements provided by BS 99001 will steer decision-makers involved in projects to focus on delivering a quality service and product that will meet society's expectations and will empower key roles within projects to make critical decisions that will prevent harm, prevent losses and protect the long-term interest and reputation of organizations.

The ultimate purpose of this standard is to raise the bar in quality of service delivery across the sector in the UK. Today, delivering quality in construction means more than ever before – it is about saving lives, avoiding risks of business failure and complying more demonstrably to legal requirements. Organizations strategically interested in leading the market now have the opportunity to recognize, adopt and implement these requirements with confidence that they are on the right track.



How to implement the standard

The best way to start implementing the standard will be to have a high-level review of the current state of the organization's management systems and governance arrangements. This means going beyond quality, and reviewing the related health and safety, sustainability, design and information management processes, to assess whether they are appropriately defined, integrated and governed. This can be carried out via the top management review processes (see Clause 9.3). In identifying opportunities for management systems improvement, the organization can compare its current arrangements with the additional requirements set out in BS 99001 and identify any enhancements that need to be made.

Organizations may find it useful to initially focus on leadership, roles, responsibilities and project governance arrangements. This can be followed by modifications to the way that the organization processes information related to products and services, particularly the interfaces between interested parties involved in projects, and different disciplines within the organization itself (e.g., design, sustainability, information management, safety and quality control functions). Performance evaluation and reporting mechanisms can also be revised to give top management a clearer line of sight of whether key requirements are being met by their operations.

A mature approach to management of enterprise risk may prove to be useful in providing common terms of reference and a level playing field for various functions, disciplines and departments within the organization, which may previously have been working in isolation. The conversation must shift away from deciding whether safety, quality, sustainability or profit margins are most important, and towards assessing where the organization's biggest risks and opportunities lie. Internal processes should be integrated appropriately.

It is recommended to carry out a multidisciplinary review of the requirements set out in BS 99001 within the organization – whether the 'organization' is one company, or a group of companies involved in a project – and agree a joint plan of changes and modifications to current management system arrangements, shared across disciplines, fully understood and sponsored by top management.

Implementation of this British Standard is not about adding more paperwork; it is about cutting out management processes that do not work and focusing on those which do.

This standard is aimed at taking business management processes to the next level in terms of reliability and assurance, as is now clearly expected from the built environment sector. Alignment of performance monitoring and measurement processes to the delivery of critical product and service characteristics agreed with customers on projects will be instrumental to demonstrate reliability and give assurance to interested parties.

Challenges and pitfalls in using the standard

In the preparation and development of this standard, the technical committee responsible for its drafting was faced with a challenge to promote meaningful and significant improvements to the way that built assets are delivered in the UK, at the same time being mindful of the potential additional burden that this could put on organizations.

In response to this challenge, the text of the standard contains explicit requirements that are deemed critical and necessary to effect meaningful change, such as in clauses related to roles and responsibilities, and the design or control of externally sourced products (among others). Implementation of these specific critical requirements may require the organizations to evaluate internal cost impact and their internal capacity to implement the necessary changes. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out a cross-disciplinary review of this standard, as outlined above, agree priorities and assign budget and time scales where necessary to implement changes.

Opportunities to offset internal costs can be explored via the use of modern information technologies, building long-term stronger relationships with an organization's own suppliers and contractors and a higher level of integration between disciplines, functions and departments within the organization.

As with any significant organizational change, the implementation of this standard is likely to face cultural barriers within the organization and outside. Long-forged relationships and ways of working may need to be re-evaluated and re-defined, which is never easy. Therefore, it is paramount that the commitment to implementation of BS 99001 is clearly aligned with the strategic direction of the organization and is fully supported by the owners of the organization and top management.

A clear and definitive message must be given by top management sponsor(s) that implied organizational change is necessary for securing the long-term interests of the organization and the interests of those it employs. Professionals working within and with an organization that aligns itself with BS 99001 can be invited to be the driving force behind industry change, delivering better built assets and strengthening the trust that customers, end users and wider society want to have in the built environment sector.

A wide range of organizations sponsor, scope and fund built asset projects. They are uniquely placed to drive the implementation of this standard by clarifying their expectations for their consultants and contractors and expressing interest in supply chain adoption of BS 99001.

What is the wider context?

‘We are now in a post-Grenfell world’ is an expression that can be commonly heard in industry conversations and in governmental circles alike. This tragic event of 2017 is now regarded by some as a tipping point in society’s trust in the construction industry, and the ability of the regulatory bodies to assure the public of the reliability of built assets that shape and define the lives of millions in this country and globally. The threats to business continuity and to the lives of those who occupy and use the built environment can no longer be overlooked.



The UK government, in consultation with industry, is implementing a set of changes to the way that built environment project execution is overseen, with the Building Safety Act at the centre of this regulatory reform.

At the same time, the UK has made significant national commitments on sustainability; specifically, carbon reduction, business ethics and transparency of sourcing, safety and security for all of those to whom the duty of care of British enterprises extends.

These regulatory drivers, combined with the opportunities presented by information technology and construction technology innovations, give our sector the opportunity to step up our game and re-define the industry.

Users of BS 99001 will find comprehensive references to the latest revisions of other international and national standards that have a role to play in delivering high-quality built assets, particularly on information management and security, competence management, risk, procurement and sustainability.

Recognizing the fact that this British Standard is the first publication of its kind in the built environment sector, some time and conscious effort will be required for all interested parties to adapt and make the most out of it for everyone’s benefit.

Appreciation and expression of interest in BS 99001 on behalf of customers who generate construction project opportunities will lead to respective interest among leading contractors and consultants to implement this standard and obtain third-party verification of conformity.

Certification bodies, supply chain assurance service providers and management consultants are invited to evaluate this industry standard and explore opportunities in assisting organizations on implementation and assurance against the requirements of BS 99001.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this British Standard is a much-anticipated step forward for the industry.

For several decades, the adoption of ISO 9001, alongside ISO 14001 and ISO 45001, has steered organizations towards operational excellence. However, the generic nature of ISO 9001 has led to significant differences in interpretation of its requirements, at times rendering it a mere formality, a piece of paper hanging on a wall in the head office, having little effect on the way that projects work in the real world.

BS 99001 is a way to bring the ISO quality management systems requirements to life and provide an instrument to raise the bar for quality of service delivery in the built environment sector in the UK.

Further reading

Dame Judith Hackitt DBE FREng (2018) Building a Safety Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report.

The Chartered Institute of Building (2019) CIOB Code of Quality Management, Guide to Best Practice Construction Quality Management.



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Gena Ibraev is a Member of the UK Chartered Quality Institute (CQI), with qualifications in Occupational Health & Safety Management, Security Management and Risk Management from UK professional bodies.

With 17 years of international experience in construction and energy sectors, Gena is currently holding a role of Head of Assurance with Sir Robert McAlpine, a tier 1 construction contractor operating nationally in the UK.

The prior experience and the current involvement in cross-discipline management systems implementation, auditing and assurance, give Gena the opportunity to holistically evaluate risks and opportunities faced by businesses up and down the construction supply chains, as well as individual projects and joint ventures.

Gena Ibraev is an active member of the BSI technical committee responsible for the development of the BS 99001 standard.

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