

## An Apples to Apples Approach to Better Environmental Management; what is ISO 14001?

### Can you answer any of these questions with confidence?

1. Do you know what you have or do in your business that causes an impact on the planet?
2. If your key customer asked to see your environmental policy, could you show it to them?
3. A buyer for your company wants evidence that there are no environmental skeletons in your closet, could you prove it?
4. If you were fined by the government for emitting more than your certificate of approval allowed and had to go to court, would you be able to prove due diligence?

Your answers would most likely be positive on all accounts if you have an **environmental management system** that is founded on ISO 14001. If this leaves a frown or puzzled look on your face that says "great... what the heck is ISO 14001?"; keep reading.

If you have not heard about ISO 14001, that's not a surprise. Here is a two-second history lesson in ISO. The International Organization for Standardization, is responsible for developing standards for a whole host of reasons, to:

- facilitate trade,
- spread knowledge,
- increase accessibility to solutions globally by sharing technological advances and good management practice (through an "apples to apples" comparison)

ISO 14001 is just one of over 18,000 standards. These have been developed with the support of 138 countries through their national member bodies and other regional and international special interest groups.

ISO has a solid process for doing its job—marketing the product hasn't their strong suit. Management system standards have been seen as being a tool for big business or governments, marketed by service providers offering what is called third party certification; a verification or confirmation service. Social media and recognition of the importance of small business is changing the way ISO is reaching out to the market.



*An 'apples to apples' comparison is a common analogy used to simplify communication around standards despite the fact there are over 10,000 different kinds of apples.*

Let's explore ISO 14001 by answering these four questions:

1. what is it?
2. what's in it for you?
3. what does it do?
4. does it work?

### What is it?

The number is of no special significance; it's comes after 13998, 13999 ... What ISO 14001 represents is a standardized approach for an **environmental management system**—the buzz term being an **EMS**. An EMS serves as a framework to help you develop a business approach for managing the 'things' you have or do that cause an impact on the environment. These 'things' are called aspects, and they are a result of the what your company engages in to stay in business, whether you business is a government, for or not-for- profit.

### What's in it for you?

There are internal and external benefits to having an EMS; a list is on the next page. *However, for small business probably the most compelling reason to implement ISO 14001 is not one of the ones listed in most of the literature.* ISO 14001 is a formal business tool; most small businesses, particularly those with fewer than 50 employees, tend to operate informally. While there is nothing wrong with that, **increasing formality does bring improvements in productivity.** A result of improved productivity is enhanced profitability and prosperity. That means more money in your pocket. But that's just the start.

# Quick Tips



## What does it do?

ISO 14001 outlines a set of requirements or expectations which stakeholders agreed were the basics of sound environmental management for any organization of any size from anywhere in the world. For that reason, it was designed to be a 'one size fits all'. Despite global expectations ISO 14001 leaves the onus on you to decide **how** to meet or exceed these expectations.

## A Laundry List of Benefits

- Meet the environmental expectations of customers and consumers.
- Enhance skills, improve morale and build confidence in your employees.
- Create a traceable process of improvement that you can use in sales and marketing efforts.
- Maintain good community relations and enhance your public image (small business is part of the social fabric of their community).
- Take away stress as you eliminate risks.
- Position yourself for the opportunity for preferred rates from financial institutions.
- Differentiate yourself from your competition (**important for those owners thinking about selling their business**).
- Ensure that you will not be restricted from an export market (tie this in with savvy and credible use of eco-labels).
- Demonstrate your *commitment* to compliance with regulators (and this can help with a due diligence defence if you have an accident or incident that gets you into hot water).
- Reduce or eliminate waste by enhancing efficiency in design in process, products and services—this will also impact positively on your customers!
- Reduce costs; a more efficient company makes better use of human, financial and material resources, *including your time*.
- Align with other entities and suppliers who are keen about improving environmental quality; it can enhance your reputation by being part of the credibly green crowd.

## Does it work?

That is entirely up to you and how good a job you do when you implement ISO 14001.

## Key Facts about ISO 14001

- It is a voluntary standard.
- It is a standard because of the consensus process that was used to develop it—country members voted to approve it.
- ISO 14001 is based on the quality management process of Plan, Do, Check and Act.
- It is designed to help you build a systematic approach to better manage your relationship with the planet and stay productive and profitable.
- You can use all of the standard to help you build a robust and credible EMS or you can use the parts that you need to improve an existing business process.
- If you opt to use all the requirements, you can publish a statement that says so. There are rules on what you can say and what you cannot say. Learn the rules before you publish your adoption.
- **You do not have to get third party registration or certification.** There is no requirement within the standard to do this.
- Third party registration or certification is one of four 'conformity assessment' options recognized in the standard. The four include:
  - \* self-determination and self-declaration (this is the "D-I-Y" option).
  - \* confirmation of conformance by parties having an interest in the organization, such as customers (typically thought of as a supply chain audit).
  - \* confirmation of self-declaration by a party external to the organization (this is based on the EnviroReady Report; a service provided by specially trained accounting professionals).
  - \* certification/registration of the environmental management system by an external organization (this is the 'traditional' 3rd party approach).

This Quick Tip is courtesy of the Registry at [www.14000registry.com](http://www.14000registry.com).