

ISO 14001

Development and implementation

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Industries worldwide have been actively contemplating the adoption of ISO 14000. But any such standard is only as good as its implementation. While not intended as a comprehensive discussion on the subject, this article examines both the strengths of the standard and the problems in its implementation. The author warns that unrealistic expectations could lead to disappointment and discredit what is in truth an excellent management model.



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Introduction

ISO 14001 as a management model is as good as its implementation. Unrealistic expectations concerning the implementation of ISO 14001, its potential for cost savings, and the positive results on the environment could lead to disappointment of the stakeholders, and discredit an otherwise excellent management model.

The history of ISO 14001

ISO 14001 was released in September 1996. But adoption by industry, and the accreditation and certification services, had started well before that date, based on the ISO 14001 Draft International Standard. This early development was a result of other EMS standards already on the market, such as the British Standard 7750, which was used in the international arena until then, and the EU's Environmental Management and Audit-

ing Scheme [EU 1836/93, which was superseded by the COM (1999) 313 final] in Europe. The existence of these European standards created the urgent need for an international scheme.

Since its publication in 1996, the number of ISO 14001 certifications is growing exponentially, although at a slower pace than ISO 9000 Quality Management System certification (ISO, 1999). The ISO 9000-series has been on the market for 11 years, and in many countries the ISO 9000 certification is said to have reached market saturation. A comparison of the ISO 9000 and the ISO 14001 implementation follows:

After 4 years of ISO 14001/ISO 14001 DIS, industry participation has become somewhat lukewarm, unlike ISO 9000 in 1993, which, within 4 years of publication, had issued more than 20,000 certificates. At the moment there is a significant lag between the public interest in EMS, particularly ISO 14001,