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ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group **Guidance on:**

Deal with consultants

1. Introduction

There is no requirement in ISO 9001 for an organization to use a consultant when implementing its quality management system, but it is recognized that many organizations choose to do so. It is also recognized that consultants are likely to be present during certification audits, and that they may get involved to different extents in the audit process.

In some cases, the organization may request their consultant to be present during audits by the certification body. Depending on the way in which this is managed by the audit team, the involvement of a consultant can be beneficial or detrimental to achieving the audit objectives. This document provides some practical **guidance to auditors** on how to deal with some of the situations that might arise.

Note: ISO 10019 *“Guidelines for the selection of quality management system consultants and use of their services”* provides useful guidance about the ways in which a quality management system consultant might best be used in order to help an organization to achieve its objectives.

When an audit team identifies that a consultant performs any relevant roles, or holds responsibilities and authorities within the QMS, then the auditors should obtain appropriate objective evidence:

- that the top management has formally assigned these functions to the consultant,
- it is communicated within the organisation, and
- of the fulfilment of his/her duties.

2 Guidance for Third Party Auditors

- **It is important to recognize that** the contractual relationship for certification is between the certification body and its client (“the organization”), with no direct involvement of the consultant.
- Remember that it is the implementation of **organization’s Management System** that is being audited, **not the consultant!**
- If there are restrictions or reservations about the use of a specific consultant, this should be communicated and agreed with the organization prior to the audit.
- It should be made clear by the audit team leader during the opening meeting that the role of the consultant is similar to that of an observer and that the consultant should not try to influence or interfere in the audit process or in the outcome of the audit. In certain circumstances the auditee may not be able to understand the technical jargon used by the auditor and it may be beneficial to have the consultant assist the auditee to understand the issue. However, this should not be allowed to compromise either the time management for the audit, or the audit objectives.

For further information on the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group, please refer to the paper: *Introduction to the ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group*

Feedback from by the *ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group* to determine whether additional guidance documents should be developed, or if these current ones should be revised.

Comments on the papers or presentations can be sent to the following email address: charles.corrie@bsigroup.com.

The other ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group papers and presentations may be downloaded from the web sites:

www.iaf.nu
www.iso.org/tc176/ISO9001AuditingPracticesGroup

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