PODCAST 2

ISO 14001 STANDARD

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In today's episode we will focus on environmental management tools and standards specifying requirements for environmental systems.

The first category of tools are diagnostic tools, such as life cycle analysis, environmental audits and environmental impact assessments. Thanks to them, organizations can understand the impact of their activities on the environment and identify areas requiring improvement.

The next category is implementation tools such as ecological marketing, environmental labeling and environmental management systems. These tools focus on implementing practical actions and strategies that aim to minimize the organization's negative impact on the environment and promote activities consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

The most common standards specifying requirements for Environmental Systems are currently:

- ISO 14001 - Environmental Management Systems (EMS): Provides an Environmental Management System standard, defining the principles and procedures that organizations should follow to effectively manage the environmental impact of their activities. EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme): It stands for Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, which provides a framework for companies wishing to construct an effective environmental management system, including audits and regular assessments.
- FSC - Forest Management and Chain of Custody Certification System: Focuses on the certification of sustainable forest management and controls the origin of wood products.
- ISO 50001 - Energy Management System: Sets standards for an Energy Management System, helping organizations use energy efficiently and reduce energy-related costs.

Additionally, eco-related elements are also present in other standards, such as:

- SQAS (Safety and Quality Assessment System): It is a System for Research and Assessment of Safety and Quality developed by the European Chamber of Chemical Industry, aimed at establishing conditions for responsible and safe trade of products in the chemical industry.
- SQMS (Supplier Quality Management System): This is a standard for McDonald's suppliers that defines the requirements for supplier quality management.
- Standards of individual global corporations: Multinational companies such as Toyota and Toshiba set their own standards, which are often more stringent than general standards, to meet their specific needs and expectations regarding environmental management.

Let us emphasize that environmental management tools, including environmental management systems, are currently key elements of the strategies of companies striving for sustainable development. Their implementation allows organizations not only to meet standards and regulations, but also to minimize the negative impact on the environment.

In today's episode, we will focus on the ISO 14001 standard, as the most recognized international standard for environmental management systems, providing a framework for organizations to effectively manage the impact of their activities on the environment. We also discussed its main elements, such as environmental policy, planning, implementation, checking and corrective actions, and review by management.

The ISO 14001 standard provides a framework for organizations that want to actively identify and understand the environmental aspects of their activities, products and services. Its aim is to support organizations in establishing environmental protection policies and objectives, as well as in understanding how to effectively manage key aspects, implement the necessary measures and define specific goals to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection activities.

In practice, the ISO 14001 standard enables organizations to effectively manage their obligations to comply with applicable legal standards, regulations and other obligations to stakeholders. Additionally, the standard encourages systematic monitoring and assessment of compliance, which enables continuous improvement of the management system to increase the effectiveness of environmental protection activities.

The first edition of ISO 14001 was in 1996, followed by a revised edition in 2004. It is the most widely known and used worldwide set of best practices for environmental management systems. The standard is of a general nature, which means that it can be successfully implemented in all organizations, regardless of their size or industry. ISO 14001 is based on two fundamental principles: continuous improvement and compliance with applicable legal requirements.

The ISO 14001 standard provides a set of guidelines for an environmental management system. Including elements for formulating the environmental policy and objectives of the organization, taking into account the requirements of legal regulations and significant information regarding the enterprise's impact on the environment. The standard can be applied regardless of the size and type of activity and is adequate to various geographical, cultural and social conditions.

The ISO 14001 standard contains the following requirements for five main elements of an environmental management system:

- Environmental policy
- Planning
- Implementation
- Checking and corrective actions
- Review performed by management.

Environmental management is based on the principle of continuous improvement. The ISO 14001 standard does not impose specific requirements for specific environmental performance. Importantly, this standard only requires that the organization conducts its activities in accordance with the obligations set out in its environmental policy. It also requires that the organization operates in accordance with applicable legal regulations and undertakes to continuously improve the implemented environmental management system.

In other words, ISO 14001 does not impose a specific list of results that an organization must achieve in the area of environmental protection. However, it is important that the organization scrupulously follows its assumptions contained in its environmental policy, operates in accordance with applicable law, and, moreover, commits itself to continuous improvement of its environmental management system. This approach enables adaptation to changing conditions and requirements, which is part of the spirit of continuous improvement.

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

• The construction and operation of the environmental management system takes place within a clearly defined and transparent framework, which is also flexible to adapt to the individual needs and expectations of the company.

• Offers tools to improve the effectiveness of environmental protection activities and effective methods of monitoring and measuring this effectiveness.

• Helps reduce pollution, waste and unintentional emissions into the environment, taking into account product life cycle impacts.

• Supports better management of resources, including energy consumption, which can lead to lower operating costs of the company.

• Contributes to meeting the requirements of law and corporate regulations related to environmental protection.

Environmental management system certification demonstrates increased awareness of sustainability and gives ecologically credible companies a competitive advantage in domestic and international markets.

The ISO 14001 standard provides clear management guidelines designed to reduce negative environmental impacts while ensuring compliance with legal requirements and building stakeholder trust. This standard enables organizations to take a systematic approach to planning, implementing and managing an environmental management system.

Finally, it is worth noting that environmental management standards provide organizations with clear guidelines, enabling them to effectively meet legal requirements, build stakeholder trust and systematically improve environmental protection activities.

Thank you for listening, and see you in future episodes on environmental management!

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