

Publicizing your ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification

Businesses and other organizations which have invested time, energy and money to obtain an ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certificate understandably wish to publicize their achievement.

This leaflet aims to help ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 certificate holders avoid the pitfalls of false, misleading or confusing claims in advertisements, promotional material, including videos, and other means of letting the market know that they operate a quality management system which has been independently assessed and certified as conforming to ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003, or an environmental management system assessed and certified to ISO 14001.

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and its members regularly receive enquiries from companies seeking permission to use the ISO logo in material promoting ISO 9000 certification. Similar requests relating to ISO 14000 are likely to grow since the publication in September 1996 of the first standards in that family. Regrettably, the answer in both cases has to be "No". We'll explain why below.

In addition, print media advertisements are brought to our attention in which the enthusiasm of companies proud to announce their ISO 9000 certification (also referred to in some countries as "ISO 9000 registration") has led them astray. So that others do not make the same mistakes, we'll point out where the traps lie.

On a positive note, we are very happy to publish in this leaflet some examples of advertisements from around the world in which companies have publicized their ISO 9000 certification in an accurate manner. As the variety of styles of these good examples illustrates, being accurate does not mean limiting the imagination. We thank the companies concerned for giving us permission to reproduce their advertisements as examples of good promotional practice.

A description of the pitfalls they have avoided follows, along with a couple of illustrations of what not to do. When publicizing ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification (registration) in any form, ISO asks companies and organizations to take these points into account. Firstly, however, a clarification of ISO 9000-related terminology, as commonly used in the business world, is in order. The following remarks are also applicable to ISO 14000.

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Quick reminders

- ISO does not assess or audit quality systems to confirm that they conform to an ISO 9000 standard and ISO does not assess or audit environmental management systems to confirm that they conform to ISO 14001.
- ISO does not issue either ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certificates.
- ISO does not carry out approval of ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certificates, which are issued by certification (registration) bodies independently of ISO.
- “ISO certification” or “ISO registration” does not exist, whether to ISO 9000, ISO 14000 or any other of the standards ISO has developed. What is, in most cases, meant is “ISO 9000 certification” or “ISO 9000 registration” (and increasingly in the future, “ISO 14000 certification” or “ISO 14000 registration”) – which is performed independently of ISO.
- The ISO logo is a registered trademark and ISO does not authorize its use in connection with ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification (registration).
- ISO 9000 is not a product quality label and no product label, advertisement or other promotional material should give the impression that a product (including hardware, software, processed materials and services) is “ISO 9000-certified” or “ISO 9000-registered”.
- ISO 14001 is not a label signifying a “green” or “environmentally friendly” product. No product label, advertisement or other promotional material should give the impression that a product is “ISO 14001-certified” or “ISO 14001-registered”.
- Advertisements which imply a quality ranking between ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 are misleading.

Clarifying terms

The assessment of a quality system against the requirements of one of the ISO 9000 standards and the subsequent issuing of a certificate to confirm that it is in conformance with the standard's requirements is variously referred to in different countries as “certification” or “registration”. In fact, these two terms are employed in a broader conformity assessment context than that of ISO 9000 alone and their standardized definitions show that they are not synonyms. However, in the ISO 9000 context, “certification” and “registration” are used interchangeably in some countries – a practice which reflects different national, or business-culture preferences. Likewise, the bodies which issue ISO 9000 certificates – “certification bodies” – are referred to in some countries as “registration bodies”, or “registrars”. Again, these different appellations refer to the same type of body.

In this document, to avoid the repetition of unwieldy terms like “certification/registration” or “certification (registration)”, the terms “certification” and “certification body” will be primarily used.

“Accreditation” is another term which, in the ISO 9000 context, is also sometimes used – wrongly – as a synonym for “certification” or “registration”. “Accreditation” is the procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks. In the ISO 9000 context, it relates to the work of national accreditation bodies which have been set up in a number of countries to provide some measure of control over the activities of quality system certification bodies. An accreditation body will accredit – or, in simpler language, approve – a certification body as competent to carry out ISO 9000 certification of quality management systems. Certification bodies can increasingly be expected to seek accreditation for ISO 14000 certification of environmental management systems.

Readers interested in the standardized definitions of the above terms should consult the document, ISO/IEC Guide 2,

ISO – the organization

General terms and their definitions concerning standardization and related activities.

A final point on terminology concerns “ISO 9000 certification” and “ISO 14000 certification”.

In actual fact, “ISO 9000 certification” means certification against ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003. When speaking generally, the generic term “ISO 9000 certification” is much more convenient than clumsy, and possibly confusing, alternatives such as “ISO 9001/2/3” or “ISO 900x” certification – which is why it has entered into common usage, and is employed in this text. However, readers should be aware that an actual “ISO 9000 certificate” will specify against which standard the quality system in question has been assessed and found to be in conformance. In the interests of transparency, promotional material publicizing the certification should also be specific.

In the case of the ISO 14000 family, there is only one standard of which the intended uses include that of a model for environmental management system certification – ISO 14001. An organization which seeks certification of an environmental management system which it operates as conforming to the standard will therefore be issued with an ISO 14001 certificate. Nevertheless, in this text, the term “ISO 14000 certification” is employed for the sake of consistency.

In both cases, the use of the generic term may have the merit of serving as a reminder that ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 are families of International Standards whose scopes – and usefulness for the organizations which implement them – cover far more than just the requirements for achieving certification.

To understand why ISO does not allow its logo to be used in connection with ISO 9000 certification (and will not in relation to ISO 14000 certification either), the following background information will help.

The standards which make up the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families are among more than 11 400 voluntary International Standards developed and published by ISO. These standards cover almost the entire range of technology and are based on international consensus among experts from the sector which has expressed the need for a particular standard.

ISO’s primary role is developing International Standards. However, it also develops Guides, when appropriate, that help to ensure good practice in standards-related activities, and other documents that promote the development of standardization, or facilitate the implementation of standards.

ISO itself does not carry out assessments to check that its standards are being implemented by users in conformity with the requirements of the standards. Conformity assessment – as this process is known – is a matter for suppliers and their clients in the private sector, and of regulatory bodies when ISO standards have been incorporated into public legislation.

In addition, there exist many testing laboratories and certification bodies which offer independent (also known as “third party”) conformity assessment services to provide confirmation that products (including hardware, software and processed materials), services or systems measure up to ISO standards. Such organizations may perform these services under a mandate to a regulatory authority, or as a commercial activity the aim of which is to create confidence between suppliers and their clients. In some countries, ISO members carry out conformity assessment, either on behalf of their respective governments, or as a business operation. ISO itself has no authority to control these activities.

ISO 9000

However, in partnership with the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), ISO has developed ISO/IEC Guides covering various aspects of conformity assessment activities and the organizations that perform them. The voluntary criteria contained in these Guides represent an international consensus on what constitutes acceptable practice. Their use contributes to the consistency and coherence of conformity assessment worldwide and so facilitates trade across borders.

The ISO 9000 family of standards represents an international consensus on good management practices with the aim of ensuring that the organization can time and time again deliver the product or services that meet the client's quality requirements. The standards give organizations guidelines on what constitutes an effective quality management system, and models against which this system can be audited to give the organization and its clients assurance that it is operating effectively.

ISO 9004-1 (and the other parts of ISO 9004) gives guidelines on the elements of quality management and a quality system. The ISO 9000 family also includes three quality assurance models – ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 – against which the quality system can be audited. The organization should carry out this auditing itself to verify that it is managing its processes effectively. In addition, it may invite its clients to audit the quality system in order to give them confidence that the organization is capable of delivering products or services that will meet their needs.

Lastly, the organization may engage the services of an independent quality system certification body to obtain an ISO 9000 certificate of conformity. This last option has proved extremely popular in the market-place because of the perceived credibility of an independent assessment. It may thus avoid multiple audits by the organization's clients, or reduce the frequency or duration of client audits. The certificate can also serve as a business reference between the organization and potential clients, especially when supplier and client are new to each other, or far removed geographically, as in an export context.



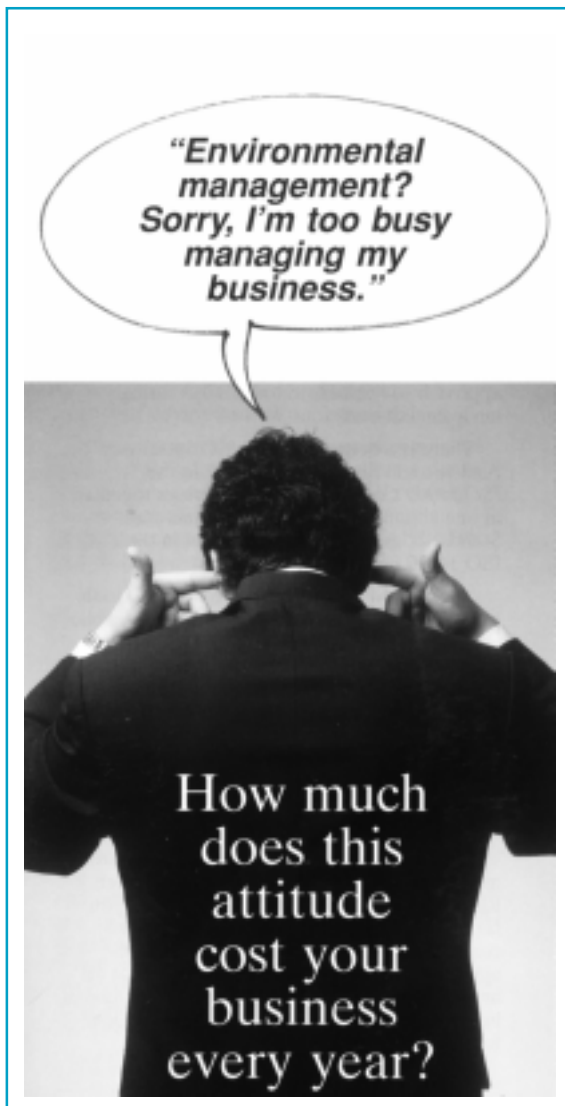
ISO 14000

The ISO 14000 family, of which the first standards were published in September and October 1996, addresses various aspects of environmental management. The very first two standards, ISO 14004 and ISO 14001, deal with environmental management systems. These are management tools to enable an organization of any size or type to control the impact of its activities, products or services on the environment. An environmental management system represents a structured approach to setting environmental objectives and targets, to achieving these and demonstrating that they have been achieved.

The standards do not specify levels of environmental performance – a fact which allows them to be implemented by a wide variety of organizations, whatever their current level of environmental maturity. However, a commitment to compliance with applicable environmental legislation and regulations is required, along with commitment to continual improvement – for which the environmental management system provides the framework.

ISO 14004 provides guidelines on the elements of an environmental management system and its implementation, and discusses principal issues involved.

ISO 14001 specifies the requirements for such an environmental management system. Fulfilling these requirements demands objective evidence which can be audited to demonstrate that the environmental management system is operating effectively in conformance with the standard. ISO 14001 can thus be used for internal purposes – to provide assurance to the organization's management – and for external purposes – to provide assurance to interested parties. In the external context, conformance to ISO 14001 can be used to support what an organization claims about its own environmental policies and actions. It is suitable for both supplier's declarations of conformity, assessment of conformity by an external stakeholder – such as a business client – and for certification of conformity by an independent certification body.



The following guidelines are intended to assist organizations when they come to publicizing their ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certificate.

ISO 9000
is not just
for big
businesses...



ISO's logo

ISO will not authorize the use of its logo in connection with material publicizing an ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification – some examples of such uses are in company letterheads, marketing leaflets, advertisements, and so on. The ISO logo is a registered trademark. ISO does not authorize its logo to be used, either by quality system certification bodies, or by the companies to which the latter issue ISO 9000 certificates. The same applies to ISO 14000 certifications, as these become more widespread. Allowing the ISO logo to be used would give the false impression that ISO carries out certification activities, or has approved or authorized the organization using its logo. These activities are not business functions of ISO.

ISO is not an auditor, assessor, registrar, or certifier of either quality systems or environmental management systems – or, for that matter, of materials, products and services – nor does it endorse any such activities performed by other parties. ISO develops International Standards but, at present, operates no scheme for assessing conformance with them.

Allowing the use of our logo in advertisements or other publicity material would give the impression that ISO has “approved” such a certification – or even carried it out. For the reasons given above, such an impression would be totally misleading.

No such thing!

A point which logically follows on from the above remarks is that it is false to describe a company as “ISO-certified”, “ISO-registered”, or to use phrases such as “ISO certification”, “ISO certificates” and “ISO registration”.

As noted above, ISO operates no system for assessing the conformance of organizations' management systems with standards in the ISO 9000 family, or the ISO 14000 family.

ISO itself carries out neither ISO 9000 nor ISO 14000 audits and awards no certificates attesting to conformity with the standards. There is no such thing as “ISO certification”, or “ISO registration”, whether in relation to ISO 9000, ISO 14000 or any other ISO standard.

A simple exercise to demonstrate why the term “ISO certification”, which often crops up in relation to ISO 9000, is a misleading abbreviation for “ISO 9000 certification” is to substitute another name for “ISO”. For example, the phrase “US certification” could give the impression that it is the US Government, or some other official institution, which is carrying out the certification. This impression would be wrong. ISO 9000 certification services are being carried out in the United States by independent quality system certification bodies, not by the US Government. And not by ISO either, whether in the United States or elsewhere, which is why “ISO certification” is an unacceptable abbreviation for “ISO 9000 certification”. Likewise, using “ISO certification” as an abbreviation for “ISO 14000 certification” would only confuse matters further.

Both ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 auditing and certification are carried out independently by certification bodies under their own responsibility.

Readers will see that some of the companies among our good examples take care to identify which certification body has issued them a certificate and, with the permission of that body, include the latter’s logo in the advertisement. This practice has the merit of transparency. The market is being informed about which certification body is giving its word that such-and-such a company has met the requirements laid down in the ISO 9000 standard concerned, and the market decides what credibility that certification body’s certificate bestows.

In addition, national accreditation bodies have been set up in a number of countries (sometimes, but not always, with a government mandate) to exercise a degree of control over the activities of certification

bodies. When one of the latter can demonstrate that it fulfills the criteria of the accreditation system, it is duly accredited – which can increase market confidence in the value of an ISO 9000 certificate issued by that certification body to a company. The certificate may carry the logo of the accreditation body, in addition to that of the certification body, and the company may have the right to use both logos in its promotional material publicizing its ISO 9000 certification.

When a company implies in promotional material that it is ISO which has awarded the company an ISO 9000 certificate, this will in the long run harm the credibility of that company as more people become aware that there is no such thing as “ISO certification” or “ISO registration”. Similar remarks apply to ISO 14000 as accreditation and certification in respect of environmental management systems become common.

An example of what to avoid: this logo is unacceptable on two counts. Firstly, it incorporates part of the ISO logo, which is a registered trademark. Secondly, it gives the false impression that ISO carries out ISO 9000 certification. ISO does not authorize the use of its logo in connection with certification and it does not operate an ISO 9000 certification scheme.



A potential for confusion

Another practice to be avoided is using “ISO” as shorthand for “ISO 9000” in such phrases as “ISO compliance”, “Implementing ISO helped us reduce reworks and rejects”, or “Never mind the certificate: ISO is just very good management practice!”.

The ISO 9000 series is one of best known in the history of ISO, but it is not the only success story of the organization, which develops standards not only for quality management, but over almost the entire range of technology. So while “ISO” may indeed mean ISO 9000 to one audience, it may mean freight container dimensions, film speeds or computing protocols to others and, increasingly, it will mean environmental management to still others. Therefore, if a reference to “ISO” really means “ISO 9000” or “ISO 14000”, it is better to say so.

ISO 9000? Be precise!

ISO 9000 assessments and certifications are specific. The ISO 9000 certificate will delineate the scope of activities covered by the quality management system which the certification body has assessed and found to be in conformance with ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003.

Some businesses have achieved “company-wide” certification of all their processes and activities. However, in the majority of cases, companies achieve quality system certification on a site-by-site basis, or by product line or service.

So, if the quality system at a company’s head office unit is ISO 9000-certified, this does not mean that all the company’s branches – whether in the same country or abroad – are allowed to claim similar status until their quality systems too have been assessed and issued a certificate. The quality system being assessed is regarded as a specific characteristic of the site where it is operated.

In advertisements and other promotional material, companies are encouraged to be precise about the area of their business for which they have been awarded an ISO 9000 certificate.

ISO 14000? Be specific!

An organization which implements an environmental management system based on the ISO 14000 standards has the freedom and flexibility to define the boundaries of that system. In other words, the system may cover the entire organization, or specific operating units or activities of the organization.

However, if the organization decides to have the system certified as conforming to ISO 14001, then any publicity given to the certification should not misrepresent its extent. This could happen, for example, by giving the impression that a company-wide environmental management system has been certified when, in fact, only one operating unit among several has been certified.

No ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 products

ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 are generic models against which a quality management system can be audited. They do not specify the quality criteria for a specific product.

Therefore, no advertisement or other form of publicity should give the impression that a product – whether the product is hardware, software, a processed material, or a service activity – is “ISO 9000-certified” or “ISO 9000-registered”.

This false claim can result from showing an image of a product with “ISO 9000-certified” or “ISO 9000-registered” stamped on it. In fact, the company concerned will have been assessed and certified in respect of the processes that made up the manufacturing

No pulling rank!

of that product. But this is not the same thing as product certification. It is unacceptable to mislead purchasers and consumers by giving the impression that ISO 9000 is a product quality label.

By the same token, a product itself should not carry the mention “ISO 9000-certified” or “ISO 9000-registered”, nor should the product carry the logo of the certification body in a way that gives the false impression that the product itself is ISO 9000-certified or ISO 9000-registered.

Similar remarks apply to ISO 14001. For example, while this standard will assist an organization in managing the impact on the environment of its product-manufacturing processes, an ISO 14001 certification is not to be confused with one of the “green” or “environment-friendly” labels which are becoming more and more commonly found on products.

Environmental labelling is an issue which is being dealt with by further standards of the ISO 14000 family.

An example of what to avoid: this is unacceptable because it gives the false impression that ISO 9000 is a product quality label. ISO 9000 certificates are issued for quality management systems, not products.

ISO 9001, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 are the three standards against which a quality system can be audited and certified. ISO 9001 certification of a quality system does not signify a higher level of quality than ISO 9002 certification, and the latter is not “better”, or of a higher quality ranking than ISO 9003 certification.

The three standards differ in their scopes:

- ISO 9001 sets out the requirements for an organization whose business processes range all the way from design and development, to production, installation and servicing;
- for an organization which does not carry out design and development, ISO 9002 is the appropriate standard since it does not include the design control requirements of ISO 9001 – otherwise, its requirements are identical;
- ISO 9003 is the appropriate standard for an organization whose business processes do not include design control, process control, purchasing or servicing, and which basically uses inspection and testing to ensure that final products and services meet specified requirements.

So, an organization chooses that its quality system be certified against ISO 9001, ISO 9002 or ISO 9003 according to the business processes covered by the quality system. Advertisements which imply a quality ranking between the three standards are misleading and should be avoided.



What to do about misleading publicity

There are several things that people can do if they suspect that a product, an advertisement or other promotional material carries misleading information with respect to ISO 9000 or ISO 14000. If the ISO logo is used, or the impression given that ISO certified or approved a management system of the company concerned, then ISO would like to receive a copy of the material carrying this information. The complaint should go to the ISO member institute in the country concerned, or to the ISO Central Secretariat, although the Central Secretariat would ask its national member to intercede.

If there is a problem or doubt concerning the scope of the certification claimed, or something of a related nature that would concern the certification body which issued the certificate, then the certification body should be informed, along with the accreditation body. In all cases, the advertiser itself should be informed.

Getting it right!

While urging companies to avoid the above pitfalls, we congratulate you on your achievement in achieving ISO 9000 or ISO 14000 certification and understand your desire to share the news with your customers, both present and potential.

As the good examples on the following pages illustrate, with a little thought and ingenuity, you can get it right. In style!

ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies from some 130 countries, one from each country. Its mission is to promote the development of standardization and related activities in the world with a view to facilitating the international exchange of goods and services, and to developing cooperation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological and economic activity.

For more information on ISO 9000 and ISO 14000

Contact

your national standards institute or the ISO Central Secretariat.

Read

– *ISO 9000 News* (six issues a year), which includes updates on the ISO 9000 family of quality management and quality assurance standards, and news on their implementation around the world, as well as related developments, such as ISO 9000 certification; coverage of ISO 14000 is being increased as these new standards are implemented;

– *ISO Bulletin* (monthly), which provides an overview of ISO's activities in international standardization over almost the entire range of technology, including articles on the ISO 14000 family of environmental management standards.

Both publications are available through ISO's national members and the Central Secretariat.

Connect

with *ISO Online*, the electronic information service on Internet, accessible via the World Wide Web by connecting with the following Uniform Resource Locator (URL):

<http://www.iso.ch/>

Some good examples of advertisements – from the Press and on telephone cards – publicizing ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 certifications. Being accurate does not mean limiting the imagination!

"LE"
DÉMÉNAGEMENT
DEPUIS 1891



PELICHET

51 - 55, route des Jeunes | Tél.: 022/827 80 00
1227 Carouge/Genève | Fax : 022/ 823 08 18

ISO 14001

A OPP Petroquímica é o primeiro grupo produtor de resinas e especialidades poliolefinicas a obter a certificação de um Sistema de Gerenciamento Ambiental no Brasil. Esta certificação é o resultado do esforço da Empresa em contribuir para o desenvolvimento sustentado do País.

MATÉRIA-PRIMA DO DESENVOLVIMENTO

