

ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 help increase sales



"Put simply, we have gained not only prestigious contracts, but also credibility and confidence in the workplace as a result of our ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certificates"

Tony Peters

Sales and Marketing Director,
Shades of Comfort

Customer needs

- To have independent auditing
- To increase corporate client base
- To improve internal efficiency
- To improve customer satisfaction

Customer benefits

- Staff commitment to continual improvement
- Business growth
- Ability to cater for customers that have ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 as a prerequisite for supply, whilst also helping the environment
- Increased client satisfaction
- Increased awareness of business goals and objectives

Why certification?

Legislative change in recent years has prompted a greater appreciation of the benefits of outdoor trading at licensed premises. Shades of Comfort Limited was formed in 2005 by Tony Peters and Barrie Evans to provide outdoor solutions following the smoking ban in pubs and restaurants.

Shades of Comfort helps turn external space into extended customer entertainment areas. The company has subsequently expanded rapidly and services major groups including Whitbread Group PLC, Enterprise Inns, Admiral Taverns, St Austell Breweries and Young's.

As a result of the work with Whitbread Group PLC, Shades of Comfort was awarded sole provision for umbrellas and awnings to Costa Coffee – a contract that covers in excess of 1200 UK outlets.

Gaining certification to the quality management system ISO 9001, and the environmental management system ISO 14001, was an integral part of Shades of Comfort's business plan as the company recognized that achieving certification would provide business credibility in terms of performance and efficiency to larger clients, as well as clear evidence of continued commitment to the environment.

The company has as a result been in a stronger position to target customers in the following sectors: public sector and utility companies, government, councils, authorities, blue chip companies and other organizations such as theme parks, zoos, hospitals, stately homes, leisure chains, shopping centres and museums.

Sales and Marketing Director, Tony Peters, explains that "The quality of products and services has always been important to Shades of Comfort and our business growth has been largely due to recommendation. For this reason it was crucial to back this up by making sure that the company itself had systems, processes and procedures fully documented as well as developing an ethos of continual improvement and customer

satisfaction that would be ingrained in everything we do. It was also crucial to have a controlled system in place which identifies and manages our environmental responsibilities, and helps lower our impact on the world in which we live.

Implementation

Shades of Comfort obtained registration to ISO 9001 within just nine months, and ISO 14001 within a year. Tony Peters explains that they chose to work with BSI because, "When you think of quality, the benchmark is the British Standards Institution". We had a first class consultant on both occasions, who worked closely with us and took us through the benefits of having quality and environmental management systems, and their potential influence on quality and client satisfaction. It didn't take long before our entire staff became advocates of the project."

Whilst gaining accreditation reflects a substantial achievement for the company, it has not been without its challenges. With regards to the environmental management system accreditation awarded in February 2012, it has not always been easy to source sustainable materials and products. Says Peters, "In an ideal world, all outdoor leisure products on the market today would be eco-friendly and 100% recycled. However, this is not the case – and we've really had to search high and low when sourcing materials and creating our products, to ensure they not only live up to the standards of quality expected from us, but also fit the criteria expected from ISO 14001."

Peters continues "Our fantastic recycled furniture really is testament to our dedication in actively lowering our carbon footprint and additionally developing our company for the better as we move forward."

Benefits

"Obtaining both ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 has been a magnificent achievement for Shades of Comfort", continues Peters. "Everyone signed into quality as an objective for our

business, the way we conduct ourselves and the way customers view us. We also believe that as a company, we must actively seek to lower our impact on the eco structure, and go further to encourage ranges of recycled and sustainable products within our sales portfolio."

"I believe we are now in a position to survive the current economic downturn, and are in good stead to be able to grow when the financial situation improves. We have already had encouragement from large organizations and secured business that we could not have obtained prior to certification. Put simply, we have gained not only prestigious contracts, but also credibility and confidence in the workplace."

The future

Shades of Comfort continue to use the management systems to drive continual improvement in the way that they work and help them seek ways in which they can reduce their environmental footprint. The valuable input they receive from BSI on an on-going basis will help them in their drive for excellence, performance improvement and customer satisfaction. Kerry Garratt, Product Marketing Manager, BSI says that BSI are pleased to see that Shades of Comfort have chosen to extend their ISO 9001 system to include ISO 14001 and that they value their relationship with BSI.

Next steps

ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 are quality management system standards designed to help an organization focus on customers, the environment and drive continual improvement in its internal processes.

Almost 900,000 organizations are certified as being compliant to the ISO 9001 standard in 170 countries worldwide

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+65 6270 0777
sgp@bsigroup.com
bsigroup.sg

