



Good for business

The small business guide to standards



Ten things standards can do for your business

Contents

2. How standards make the difference
4. Standards made simple
5. Find the right standards for you
6. Safeguarding the future: sustainability standards
7. If the worst happens: business continuity standards
8. Innovate to accumulate: innovation standards
9. At your service: services standards
10. Flying a kite for quality: Corintech
11. From the ground up: Celtic
12. Safe and secure: Sapphire
13. Selling surgical success: MCS Medical
14. Setting firm foundations: Jane Wernick Associates
15. Fighting fire with fire: MC Fire Protection
16. Get certification
18. Set your standards – and win new business
19. Sell your standard to new customers
20. About BSI
20. Find out more

1. Improve your goods and services

2. Prove your commitment to quality

3. Open the door to new customers...

4. ...and keep existing customers coming back

5. Sharpen your business processes

6. Cut costs – and drive profitability

7. Help ensure regulatory compliance

8. Give your firm a competitive edge

9. Support your export efforts

10. Strengthen your marketing pitch



How standards make the difference

The benefits of standards look impressive on paper. But do they really deliver those benefits to small firms?

If someone were to tell you that you can make your business more efficient, improve the quality of your products and services, win new customers and boost that all-important bottom line, you would want to know more. Using standards can do all these things for small firms.

At the most basic level, standards are simply applying tried and tested best practice to your business. They encourage you to focus on the products or services you deliver, the business processes you follow and the way you manage your business as a whole.

They do this by providing a practical framework for you to examine, review and continuously improve any area of your business. You can

follow this best practice informally or choose to get outside confirmation from a recognized certification body.

But however you approach standards, they can – and do – provide solid benefits for firms like yours.

Simon Macaulay is managing director of Anglo Recycling Technology, a Rochdale-based manufacturer of insulation, carpet underlay and felt products from recycled and waste fibres. Trading for seventy years, the business employs 30 people and has been working with standards for over a decade.

“Around twelve years ago we signed up to ISO 9001 – the quality management

standard. We comply with this to ensure we achieve consistently high standards and to give added assurance about the quality of our goods,” says Simon.

According to him, there are number of areas of Anglo Recycling Technology that have seen tangible benefits from the introduction of standards.



“ We’re trying to meet more standards all of the time, because this can open the door to new markets where the margins are higher ”

Simon Macaulay, Anglo Recycling Technology

Driving efficiency and improving quality

Using the ISO 9001 standard has enabled Anglo Felt to improve the efficiency of its business and consequently to raise product quality.

“Perhaps the biggest way in which ISO 9001 has affected our operations is that we started to keep a log of any complaints about quality,” Simon explains. “It helps customer satisfaction, and knowing what our customers want in qualitative terms means we can make a continual assessment of how we are performing as a business.”

There is a more fundamental benefit, too, he says. “In my opinion, many small firms can be quite disorganized, so introducing standards helps to improve the structure of the business.”

Win new customers with standards

Using a formal standard like ISO 9001, and deciding to have it independently certified, has marketing benefits as well.

“Once you’ve introduced a standard into your business, it’s important to publicize the fact,” Simon stresses. “We put the information about our standards into our letterheads because it makes a statement to existing and potential new customers about our commitment to quality.”

This is particularly useful when pursuing new business. “I think it’s quite hard to do business in certain areas without standards. We’re trying to meet more standards all of the time, because this can open the door to new markets where the margins are higher,” he says.

Standards made simple

Some people think standards are only for big business or involve significant costs. Not true – standards are what you choose to make them.

Every ambitious business strives for quality, consistency, efficiency and best practice. Standards will help ensure your business is getting the best results and show you how to keep improving. But you can choose how structured you want to make the process.

Formal and informal standards

Informal standards can be as straightforward as having company guidelines on how phone calls should be answered, or following your trade association's code of practice. They are essential if you want to achieve specific objectives and can be easily managed in-house.

Formal standards - which most people think of when 'standards' are mentioned - go a stage further by setting out criteria agreed within

your industry. They draw together best practice from industry experts, government representatives, testing and certification organizations, academics, consumer groups, trade unions and most importantly businesses.

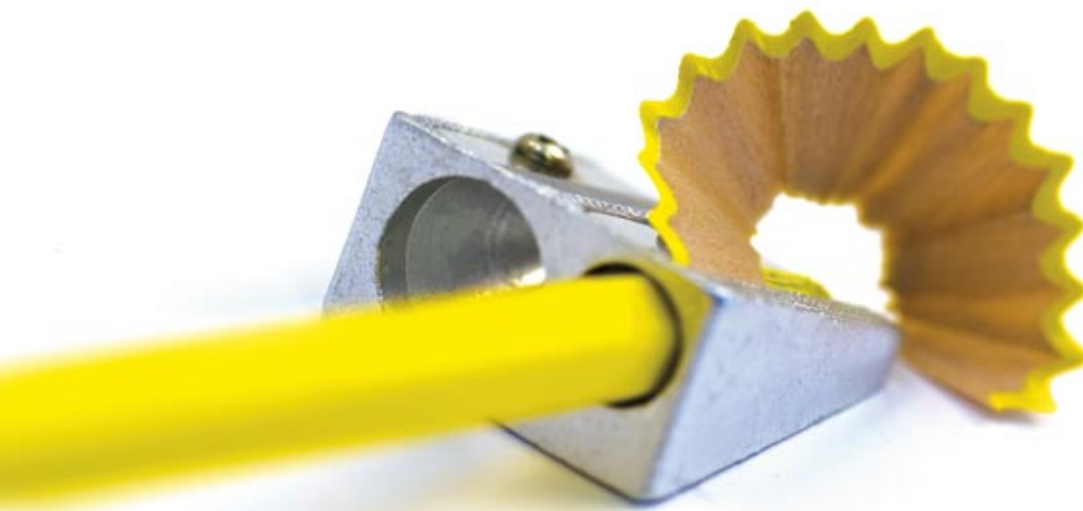
The result is a document that shows this agreed best practice. You can buy it, read it and apply it to relevant areas of your business. The price of standards varies, but is likely to be more cost-effective than you think. In fact, if you consider the business benefits of applying the standard, it could offer some of the best value for money your business can get.

With formal standards, you can also use testing or certification services from respected third parties. This gives independent proof to your customers and suppliers that you are meeting or exceeding best practice.

What formal standards can cover

Formal standards can cover your goods or services and specific parts of how you create, manage and deliver them to meet customers' needs. Or they can focus specifically on the quality management systems that you have in place underpinning your business.

Whatever you want to show your customers and suppliers that you do, there is probably a standard that covers it. There are more than 30,000 formal British standards.



Names and numbers

Each formal standard has a unique number and a prefix which shows where the standard applies. British Standards have the prefix 'BS', while European standards carry the 'EN' prefix. International standards are preceded by the letters 'ISO' or 'IEC'. Standards can be a combination of British, European and international: the three prefixes in 'BS EN ISO 9001' show that this standard is simultaneously an international, European and British Standard.

Find the right standards for you

Identifying the most suitable standards is easy if you know what you want your business to achieve

If you take a methodical approach and think about what you want your business to achieve, it should be easy to find the best standard to help you do it. Begin by talking to your trade association to find out if there are any essential requirements or recommended standards in your sector.

Check out the competition

Which parts of your business could you improve to give you a more competitive edge? Perhaps raising service levels will attract more customers – or maybe you would like to see a reduction in the returns rate of your product.

If you are in a marketplace where your competitors are already using standards, it is crucial to see which ones they are using, and why. Would you get a competitive boost from adopting the same standard – or do you want to outstrip your competitors? Using a standard that proves you are doing something your competitors cannot could reap big benefits.

Consider your customers

What's going to impress your current customers, or spark interest among potential customers? Make sure you know what matters to your customers so you can find a standard that will help you address their needs more effectively.

Bear in mind, too, that obtaining certification to a standard could provide opportunities to tender for contracts or join supply chains that would otherwise be closed to you. If you are part of a supply chain where standards are used throughout, you can be sure that your products, processes and technology are going to be compatible with the businesses that supply you through to your customers later in the chain.

Take the next step

Once you have identified the areas of your business that would benefit from the application of standards, you can find the standards, publications and guidance on the BSI website at www.bsigroup.com/small-business or call BSI on 020 8996 9001.





Safeguarding the future: sustainability standards

More of your customers are casting a serious eye to the future. Using sustainability standards – which cover the economic, social and environmental impacts of your business – can show them that you're exactly the type of firm they want to do business with

Businesses do not exist in isolation. Their actions have far wider consequences and this responsibility should be taken seriously. It is becoming clear that people prefer to buy from businesses with sound environmental, social and ethical credentials

Using environmental standards can help you to understand and improve your environmental impacts. This can win you new customers, reduce your costs significantly and increase your efficiency and profitability. Standards can also help you to be a sustainable business, one that makes good use of resources rather than wasting them, which can provide sizeable cost benefits.

Environmental management standard ISO 14001 enables businesses to limit their environmental impact.

"We introduced ISO 14001 in 2002 and it's been great for our business," says Phil Sudwell, managing director for Park Lane Press, based in Corsham, Wiltshire. The 18-strong, award-

winning company provides bespoke printing for clients that include The National Trust and the Environment Agency.

"Printing can be environmentally damaging, but we do everything we can to limit our paper, ink and plate waste," he continues.

"Following the procedures outlined in ISO 14001 has enabled us to monitor our environmental impact much more closely."

Park Lane's monitoring shows, for example, that the firm has reduced its water use by half. Between 2006 and 2007 they cut the quantity of solvents they use by 20 per cent. They have switched to cleaner soya-based inks and the company is now working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2011.

Phil stresses that they use the standard to ensure there is commitment to environmental responsibility in every area of the business.

"We cover environmental responsibilities as part of our staff reviews and train everyone in ISO 14001.

"We also vet our suppliers, train our drivers to drive in a 'greener' way and encourage customers to ask us about environmentally-friendly alternatives. Green printing now accounts for about 30 per cent of our business."

Their commitment has attracted strong PR and high-profile customers. "We've always been conscious of our environmental impact," Phil explains. "But monitoring it to such an extent has reduced our costs, improved our work and increased our revenues. We've even had educational visits from the local school so that we could talk to business studies students about working with an environmental management system."

If the worst happens: business continuity standards

A major unexpected incident can cripple any business. But using business continuity standards can at least provide reassurance to you – and your customers – that in the event of a disaster, your essential business operations can continue

Imagine disaster were to strike your business. It could be a fire gutting your premises or a serious flood, similar to those experienced in the summer of 2007, which signalled the demise of many small firms all over the country.

Or someone could vandalize your premises or hack into your IT system and delete important information. You or another key member of the team might become ill or one of your products or services could harm a customer.

What would you do? If you don't know, you are not alone. Surprisingly few small firms in the UK have business continuity plans (perhaps as few as a third, according to the Chartered Management Institute: see below), even though they can provide a critical 'lifeline' when things go wrong.

Continuity is not just an issue for larger organizations; in fact, most smaller business would not survive a major disruption without a firm continuity plan. Believing that 'It won't happen to me' is unwise. It might.

Standards can play an important role in helping you to stay afloat should serious disruption occur. They can guide you through the process of identifying risks and devising action plans to enable you to weather the

storm and get up and running quickly. Standards will also ensure you safeguard stakeholders, your brand and your reputation.

BS 25999 is the first British Standard for business continuity management (BCM). By helping managers to put in place a basic BCM system, BS 25999 enables businesses to remain operational no matter how difficult the circumstances.

BS 25999 comes in two parts, both of which are supported by an online tool. These are:

- Best-practice recommendations
- A specification for an effective BCM system, against which you can demonstrate compliance via certification by an independent third party.

It is wise to identify risk and formulate a planned response now – you never know when disaster might strike.

Sign up to the latest BCM Newsletter at www.bsigroup.com/newsletters

Useful links for Business Continuity Management

www.bsigroup.com/bs25999-1

www.bsigroup.com/bs25999-2

www.talkingbusinesscontinuity.com



Download the BS 25999-2 brochure at www.bsigroup.com/bcmonline

Number crunching

According to the Chartered Management Institute's Business Continuity Management Survey 2009, only 52 per cent of 1012 respondent organizations had a specific business continuity plan, although 64 per cent regarded one as very important. In the previous 12 months, more than 40 per cent had been seriously affected by loss of information technology; while key people had left 24 per cent and 23 per cent had suffered telecommunication breakdown. Some 30 per cent were affected by extreme weather. The report suggested that smaller businesses were less likely to be able to function remotely following serious disruption – only a quarter are thought to have business continuity plans.

Innovate to accumulate: innovation standards

Some believe standards mean everything is the same, and so hinder innovation. That's not the case at all – in fact, standards in their many forms are some of the most valuable tools for innovative small firms, as they can keep you at the forefront of fresh practices



Few sectors can rival mobile telecommunications for innovation, with new functions arriving with impressive regularity. Yet most of these new products are able to work alongside others. Standardization makes this possible for most of the world's mobile phones.

Standards are used during the research and development (R&D), design and testing of mobile phones and a wide range of other products. They remove the time and cost of starting from scratch and enable products to get to market quicker so developers can recoup their costs sooner.

The common understanding supplied by standards even enables innovators to work together and share R&D costs. This managed technological development is good for customers, who will pay less for a wider range of compatible products in the marketplace.

John Mosesson is chief executive of Suffolk-based Stramit International. Aided by BS 4046, the specification for compressed straw building slabs, his business enables customers from all over the world to set up

strawboard manufacturing plants. In some regions, this provides a vital source of affordable and sustainable housing.

"Some businesses might fear that working with standardization will act as a barrier to innovation – but this is not our experience," he says. "Some standards provide guidance on how to manufacture a product, but others simply state levels of performance a product or service must meet."

Although set up in 1945, Stramit's use of recycled straw to make panels for screens, walls, roofing, partitions and doors is still considered innovative. "We were ahead of our time in designing sustainable, recyclable and energy-saving products and processes," John observes.

"We're the only company ever to manufacture strawboard in the UK, so the standard we work with – BS 4046 – has become synonymous with Stramit. But in other parts of the world, it provides a benchmark our clients can use to produce strawboard that meets strict performance criteria."

Stramit even played a role in developing the standard. "You could be forgiven for thinking that helping to develop a standard requires disclosing your intellectual property, but it didn't.

"BS 4046 doesn't actually reveal how we manufacture our products, it simply sets out characteristics such as strength and level of fire resistance that must be reached if other manufacturers want to claim compliance. Innovative businesses such as ours are not hindered by standards. They can enable businesses to make the most out of their ideas."

Creative thinking

Another major consideration is the management of innovation itself. Guidance and support on the recognition, fostering and development of innovation with regard to new or existing products, services and techniques can be found in standards such as the 'Guide to managing innovation' (BS 7000-1).

At your service: services standards

It's not simply technical issues that standards support – increasingly standards can prove to your customer base that you're taking a lead in customer service.

Research conducted by BSI on customer service suggests that more than 60 per cent of us believe customer service in the UK is getting worse. More than 70 per cent have taken our custom elsewhere as a result, while more than half of us have not been satisfied with how a complaint was handled.

Keeping customers happy makes good business sense. Estimates vary, but attracting a new customer could cost up to six times as much as selling to an existing customer. Firms with a reputation for customer service have a valuable competitive advantage that can make winning new business significantly easier.

As well as 'universal' standards such as BS ISO 10001 and BS ISO 10003, there are sector-specific standards that enable business of all sizes to ensure their services are world-class. Quality standard BS ISO 22222, for example, specifies the ethical behaviour and competence

of professional financial planners. Use of the standard has raised service levels significantly in this fragmented market, as well as establishing an international benchmark that goes beyond regulatory requirements.

"With the exception of my degree, BS ISO 22222 is the qualification that has added the most value to my business," says Keith Churchouse of Guildford-based Churchouse Financial Planning Ltd, specialist in pensions and retirement planning.

"It's at the coalface where British Standards win every time – and BS ISO 22222 has a lot of resonance in the market. It gives customers added confidence in the business's competence, experience and ethics."

The key concern for those seeking financial advice is reliability of information provided. "Ours is a people business," Keith adds. "The standard functions as a badge of trust."

Keith's wife and fellow company director, Esther, also recognizes the benefits of standardization. "The quality of our existing processes was already very high, which meant achieving the standard happened almost immediately," she explains.

"However, in some areas we were able to raise the bar just that little bit higher, which has enhanced our customer service and increased customer satisfaction levels, too. We're committed to providing our customers with the best financial planning advice, service and support – the standard helps us to achieve this."

Satisfaction guaranteed

Available from BSI, BS ISO 10001 and BS ISO 10003 are part of a group of customer satisfaction standards. Used alongside BS ISO 10002: 2004, 'Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations', they enable businesses to put in place effective systems for dealing with customer satisfaction – from complaint prevention and handling through to dispute resolution.



Flying a kite for quality

Dean James is sales and marketing director at Corintech, a Hampshire-based electronics company that designs and manufactures bespoke electronic circuits. The company has certification to ISO 9001:2000 and the aerospace-specific BS EN 9100:2003. It also complies with the IPC-A-610D standard, which relates to the quality of its soldering, assembly and manufacturing processes and holds a Kitemark based on this standard

“We have no standard products of our own – everything we make is bespoke. Our work includes such things as internal and external aircraft lighting. We also do a lot of work for the sensor industry, as well as the military and medical sectors.

“We were an early adopter of ISO 9001. There were two reasons why, and these are still true today. Firstly, it makes us look at our own systems and how we handle manufacturing and client feedback. The other is that, to the world outside, it shows we are a competent and professional company.

“For many years, we have also complied with the IPC-A-610D standard, which relates to soldering, assembly and manufacturing processes.

“When BSI began offering a Kitemark scheme for the standard in 2004, we decided to apply. We did this primarily for marketing purposes and because the Kitemark is an internationally recognized symbol of quality.

“The Kitemark we have demonstrates that our products are suitable for use in situations where downtime can’t be tolerated, such as life-support systems.

“Although I can’t quantify the exact value to our business of choosing to be certified to all of these standards, we have definitely won contracts on the back of this and more than recouped the cost of certification. In fact, a customer recently told us that they wouldn’t do businesses with a company that didn’t hold product quality marks.

“Because we want to promote the fact that we work to high standards, we use the relevant symbols on our letterheads, business cards, invoices and website.

“I would advise any manufacturing business to consider certification to the marks and schemes for their sector. Not only does it boost the confidence you have in your own company, it also brings tangible benefits, including helping to attract new clients.”

For more information on the Kitemark visit www.kitemark.com



What is a Kitemark®?

The Kitemark is a product or service certification mark that shows it has been tested independently and audited to ensure it meets the appropriate standards of quality and safety. It is a registered trademark of BSI (The British Standards Institution).



From the ground up

Andrew Bates is Operations Director at Celtic, a remediation contractor for brownfield sites. The Cardiff-based company employs 47 people and has introduced ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and the OHSAS 18001 health and safety management standard. Andrew explains how OHSAS 18001 benefits Celtic Technologies

“Our company has been running since 1993, but we only decided to introduce OHSAS 18001 a few years ago. We already had ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 and thought the OHSAS 18001 health and safety standard would sit well alongside them.

“One of the main reasons we decided to introduce OHSAS 18001 is because it is looked on very favourably in our industry. We also believe in the concept of total quality and making sure everything we do as a business is right – not just our products and services.

“Because we had already implemented ISO 14001 and ISO 9001, we found it very easy to bring OHSAS 18001 into the business. In many ways, it was just a case of formalizing things we did already and then checking that they were correct.

“Having the standard in place plays an important role when we are bidding for work and it has almost certainly brought us new business. When we tender for contracts I’m sure we gain points because we comply with all three, as well as having our Investors in People recognition.

“The other thing standards have allowed us to do is work with greater consistency. They help when training new employees, because they provide established measures for staff members to follow.

“Once we had implemented OHSAS 18001, we decided to bring in an outside auditor so we could become registered. This allows us to put a logo on our letterheads for example, to show our compliance has been assessed and certified. Our customers have the say-so of a

third party – they don’t just have to take our word for it.

“Getting audited also brings a fresh pair of eyes to the way things are being done within your business. The auditor can often make very constructive comments.”

For the latest Health and Safety Newsletter visit www.bsigroup.com/newsletters



Satisfaction guaranteed

An assessment specification for occupational health and safety (OH&S) management systems that helps firms to demonstrate that they meet OH&S obligations. It is compatible with ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.



Safe and secure

Sapphire is a leading independent provider of information-security solutions. Based in the north of England, with offices in London and Scotland, the company is certified to the international security standard, BS ISO/IEC 27001. Sapphire's Sales Manager, David Horn, outlines some of the benefits that using the standard provides to the business and its customers

"As well as complying with the standard ourselves, we advise other firms on achieving compliance with, or certification to, BS ISO/IEC 27001. It helps companies to develop information security management systems, by covering such factors as the human element and disaster recovery.

"Organizations realize that threats to the security of the information they hold is one of the fastest growing business issues. Continuous monitoring is now a necessity and a culture of security is vital for organizations to survive in the modern business world.

"Our methodology is based on BS ISO/IEC 27001. Compliance with this standard is becoming an increasing requirement from our customers. As Sapphire works predominantly in the public sector, certification to BS ISO/IEC 27001 demonstrates that we adhere to industry best practice.

"We decided it would be a good idea to get certified to prove to our clients that our own systems were secure. It also gives us the confidence that our systems are functioning in the way they should.

"Introducing the standard brought us immediate financial benefits. Since we achieved certification we have won some of our largest deals. Following BS ISO/IEC 27001 has also enabled us to develop many excellent procedures, as well as helping us to change the culture within the organization to ensure that all our employees have a responsible attitude to information security.

"The standard itself isn't just for information technology firms – any business can benefit from it. Compliance also enables businesses to meet legal requirements, such as data protection regulations and the Freedom of Information Act.

"Sapphire was one of the first organizations in Europe to certify to the new BS ISO/IEC 27001. As a business, we publicize this fact wherever we can, because we are very proud of it."

For the latest Information Security Newsletter visit www.bsigroup.com/newsletters



What is BS ISO/IEC 27001?

BS ISO/IEC 27001 is the international standard for establishing, operating and maintaining an information security management system, whether electronic or paper-based. It gives best-practice advice about information-security management, to ensure business continuity, minimize damage and maximize return on investments.



Selling surgical success

Warren Gray is sales director of MCS Medical, a Worcestershire-based business that manufactures surgical implants and medical components such as bone screws and pins. MCS Medical was set up as an offshoot of automotive precision engineers, Machined Component Systems. Warren explains why BS EN ISO 13485:2003 continues to be important in gaining the trust of the market

“When our parent company, Machine Component Systems, was in the process of diversifying, we carried out a lot of market research. One thing we realized was that we needed more of a medical profile. You can’t sell a bone screw to an orthopaedic surgeon just as an engineered part. You need to sell it as they see it – a product that will make someone better.

“We also realized that, without the medical devices standard BS EN ISO 13485, we might not be able to attract the type of customers we wanted to reach. As a business we are trying to sell to a number of major, world-class companies. I am confident that they wouldn’t even sit down at the table with us if we didn’t use the standard.

“When such businesses procure, they have to start with a list of questions and one of those is whether the company they are considering meets BS EN ISO 13485. Through our compliance with this standard, we are allowing them to tick another box.

“The standard itself is all about inspiring confidence. It allows anyone who buys from us to see an audit trail that shows where each part has come from. It shows where we bought it, where it was made and from which material. It also means that if ever there is a problem with a particular part, we can trace where this happened.”

For the latest Healthcare Newsletter visit www.bsigroup.com/newsletters



What is BS EN ISO 13485:2003?

It specifies requirements for quality management systems for companies that need to show they can provide medical devices and related services that consistently meet regulatory and customer requirements.



Setting firm foundations

Jane Wernick is director of Jane Wernick Associates, a consulting structural engineering company based in London. The firm, which now has six employees, follows around 30 standards in the course of its day-to-day work. Jane explains why standards are essential to her company

“The business was set up in 1998. I already knew that standards were essential, because I’d used them throughout my career.

“When you design a structure you need to assess the loads and work out how big the columns and beams need to be. This requires us to refer to the standards we use on a daily basis. While we were working on the Young Vic Theatre in London, for example, we used a British Standard to determine the wind loads and live loads.

Live loads are non-permanent loads that move around; they include such things as people and snow. We also used British Standards for concrete and structural timber. We also applied standards for all of the other materials we used.

“We carry out calculations that are submitted for approval to our local council’s building control department. We’re obliged to follow best practice, so a checking engineer will use standards to make sure that we are doing this.

“Although the standards we follow aren’t regulations, they do help us to meet our legal obligations. They’re also helpful because they represent the accumulation of knowledge and experience gathered by industry.

“Sometimes we might design a structure that doesn’t fit the guidance given in a standard. But, ultimately, we’re responsible for making sure it is safe and strong enough. If something goes wrong and you haven’t followed the relevant standards you might be accused of not following best practice.

“We sometimes have to buy new standards before we start a new contract or type of work. If I don’t already know which one might be needed, I ask our librarian for advice. When the standards we already use are updated, we usually find out through the Institution of Structural Engineers’ magazine.

“When we buy a new standard, the member of our staff who will be using it reads it

through to check they understand everything. When clarification is needed, we might contact the Institution of Structural Engineers’ representative on the BSI technical committee responsible for that particular standard. Alternatively, we phone one of the other structural engineers we know to discuss it.”

For the latest Construction Newsletter visit www.bsigroup.com/newsletters



What is BS 8110?

It gives recommendations for the structural use of concrete in buildings and structures, excluding bridges and structural concrete made with high alumina cement.



Fighting fire with fire

Mike Chilman is managing director of MC Fire Protection. The Oxfordshire-based business, which employs five people, supplies and maintains fire safety equipment and provides fire risk assessments and consultancy services. As well as complying with several standards specific to the fire protection industry, MC Fire Protection is ISO 9001-registered. Mike explains why

"In 2001, soon after the business started, we bought a number of standards used in the fire protection industry.

"These are BS 5839, which relates to fire alarms, BS 5306, which relates to fire extinguishers, and BS 5588, a standard that concerns building regulations. Then, in 2004, we decided that we could also benefit from compliance with ISO 9001.

"The fire safety related standards we use allow us to give our clients the right advice when we assess them or when they buy products from us. For example, by referring to our copy of BS 5306, we can tell which fire extinguishers a customer needs, how many they need, where they should be placed and how often they should be serviced and maintained.

"Basically, I was prompted into finding out more about ISO 9001 because many of our

competitors were starting to publicize the fact that they complied with it. Now that we can do the same, we are finding that we are attracting lots of business from larger companies that want the reassurance of dealing with a firm that can demonstrate it complies with appropriate standards.

"A lot of businesses choose to trade with companies that comply with recognized standards ahead of those that don't – especially in a trade like ours, where we deal with life-saving devices.

"On a practical level, ISO 9001 has made positive changes to the business. For example, it has improved the way our workshop and storage areas are organized and has systemized the way we keep records.

"All the standards we apply have brought us extra reassurance. They help us to show that

we're more professional, while our customers are assured that the services we provide are high quality.

"I would recommend standards to other businesses operating in the fire protection industry – in fact, it's becoming more and more of a necessity. One thing that can be extremely useful, especially to small firms, is bringing in outside expertise to help with the implementation of a standard. That is what we did and found it very beneficial – and it wasn't as expensive as we'd thought."

For the latest Fire Safety Newsletter visit www.bsigroup.com/newsletters



What are BS 5839 and BS 5306?

BS 5839 is a code of practice for the system design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings. BS 5306 is a code of practice for the inspection and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers on premises.

Get certification

Having independent verification that you're complying with a standard can give you a powerful marketing hook. It tells customers and suppliers that your business can be trusted because your processes have been checked by a third party and found to be meeting or exceeding industry best practice

One of the best sales and marketing benefits of third-party certifiable standards is that they can provide you with independent verification, if you need it, that your business is meeting or exceeding them.

This means that customers and other businesses in your supply chain don't just have to take your word for it. The validation by respected, independent bodies can provide assurance to customers and boost your reputation. If your business tenders for contracts, you will probably be in a stronger position than a competitor if your firm's compliance with standards can be verified and theirs cannot.

Getting certification

Not all standards have an associated certification scheme. If a standard you choose does have one, however, you will have to decide whether your business will benefit from certification. Will customers be more impressed by external verification - or should you simply declare your own conformity?

There are many organizations that can provide certification, but it is a good idea to use someone recognized by a body such as the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). This proves that the certification or verification has been carried out by a body that has been assessed and recognized ('accredited') itself.

You can find UKAS-accredited bodies on its website (www.ukas.com) or by phoning 020 8917 8400.

Set the ball rolling

Once you have found a body to carry out the certification or validation, you will need to apply for certification. The certification body should be able to advise you on implementing the standard.

When the time comes for the formal assessment, a representative from the certifying body will then visit your business to examine how the standard is being applied. The cost will vary according to which body you use, the standard you are looking to certify to and the size of your business.

After the visit, you will either receive a compliance certificate that proves that you are meeting the standard, or some guidance about the areas where you need to carry out more work to ensure the standard is achieved. In this case, you will need to schedule another visit from the certification body when you have put the guidance into place.

Compliance certificates are time-limited and you will need to renew them after a defined period to continue to prove the independent validation.

CE marks and quality marks

CE marks and the Kitemark are among the some of the most familiar names associated with quality marks.

CE marking is a legal requirement for some products. It provides proof that a product complies with relevant EU directives. Products that require CE marking cannot, by law, be sold in the EU without it.

What you will need to prove to use the CE mark on your products depends on each specific product and directive. You can find out more about what you will need to do by visiting the BSI website at www.bsi-global.com/en/ProductServices/About-CE-Marking

The easiest way for you to demonstrate that your product complies with relevant directives is to use one of the harmonized European standards, developed specifically for this purpose. You can find out more by visiting www.newapproach.org

In the UK, the Kitemark is a widely known symbol of standard testing. Provided by BSI, it helps demonstrate that particular goods or services conform to the relevant standards.

To find out more about the BSI Kitemark, visit the website at www.kitemark.com

How certification worked for me

"In the accident repair business, more insurers are making it mandatory for suppliers to have certified standards to protect them against legal claims – so in some respects certification is essential for me to stay in business.

"But it also proves to my customers that my business's processes are industry-leading. Since getting certification to ISO 9001 and, more recently, the vehicle-repair standard PAS 125, I've retained some key customers and gained a few new contracts, too. Everyone recognizes the Kitemark which we've got with PAS 125.



“Certification for PAS 125 took about six months. Working with BSI to get certification was very good – they know their stuff. They may not be experts in repairing vehicles, but they’re excellent on standards, how to apply them and how to assess processes fairly.”

Tony Arnone, owner, Sapphire Garage, Manchester

Building new standards

The first step to creating and managing standards is to identify a business need. If you are developing a new product to which no existing standards can be applied, BSI can work with your industry to build a standard that works.

Likewise, if a product, service or process undergoes significant change, such as through technological development. All standards are reviewed every five years, or sooner if needed, to make sure they are still capturing relevant best practice.

For British Standards, this best practice is agreed by a technical committee drawn from business, trade associations, government, research, testing and certification bodies, consumer-interest groups and academic institutions.

The committee agrees the scope and purpose of the proposed new or amended standard and the standard is drafted. Once in draft form, it is published for public comment – and all feedback is considered before the standard is finalized.

Business representation on technical committees is usually via trade and professional associations rather than direct company participation. But there are different ways that you can become involved in helping to develop standards, whether simply by commenting on drafts or by applying to your trade association to act as a representative on a committee.

If you are interested in doing so, please email the BSI Technical Committee Service Centre at csc@bsigroup.com or call **020 8996 7009**.

BSI also runs a Draft for Public Comment (DPC) process where you can give your view on the content of a standard before it is published. A selected number of drafts are available via the BSI website at www.bsigroup.com/drafts

Safety in numbers

The Kitemark is recognized and trusted by over 88% of the UK population and, of those who recognise it, 93% felt products with a Kitemark were safer while 91% felt they would be better quality.

Set your standards – and win new business

Now you know a bit more about standards, you can start thinking about introducing them to your business. Follow our tips to get started and to use standards to drive new customers your way

1. Review your business

What would you like to do better? Perhaps you want to improve your customer relations, or redesign a product to make it work more effectively.

2. Identify exactly what you want to achieve

Focus closely on the results you would like to see. If it's improved customer relations, should you be handling complaints more effectively? If it's a better product, looking for product-specific improvements? Identify clearly the benefit you want the standard to provide.

3. Assess the competition

How will you compare with competitors once you have the standard? Will you be soaring ahead or drawing level? If the latter, refine your target even further to make a real competitive difference. Do a cost-benefit analysis based on the amount of new business you think would open up to you if you achieved the standard

4. Think about your customers

What benefits will a standard give your customers? Will it have an implication on your pricing? If so, be sure to factor this into your plans.

5. Consider your suppliers and the rest of the supply chain

Will applying the standard improve your position within a supply chain? Will it increase your ability to work with other businesses in the chain?

6. Search for the right standard

Once you have a picture of the business benefits, find the standard that best suits your objectives. You can browse standards on the BSI website at www.bsigroup.com/shop

7. Weight them up and make your choice

You might find more than one suitable standard that can help you meet your goals. Think about how much time and resources will be needed to implement each and how the benefits will compare. Some will require more commitment than others, but could bring greater rewards.

8. Implement your chosen standard

Follow the guidance and regularly review your progress. Celebrate your achievements as you progress.

9. Consider certification

Once your standard is fully in place, consider certification – it can make a real difference to how your firm is perceived. Complying with the standard on its own will certainly help, but certification can be additionally powerful.

10. Tell the world

Make sure your existing and potential customers know you have achieved compliance with the standard. Look around for new business opportunities that may have opened up as a result of introducing it.

Publicly Available Specifications

A Publicly Available Specification (PAS) is a commissioned document developed using a similar process to that used for the development of a British Standard. Key stakeholders are brought together to collaboratively produce a BSI-endorsed PAS which quickly satisfies business needs. After two years the PAS is reviewed and a decision is made as to whether it should be taken forward to become a formal British Standard.

Sell your standard to new customers



“ Certification for PAS 125 took about six months. Working with BSI to get certification was very good – they know their stuff. They may not be experts in repairing vehicles, but they’re excellent on standards, how to apply them and how to assess processes fairly. ”

Tony Arnone, owner, Sapphire Garage, Manchester

The first step to gaining new business once you have attained compliance within your firm is to let everyone know.

You should make sure that you are mentioning your standards in all correspondence – on letterheads and business cards, in brochures and supporting material, on your website and in any advertising you do. This will not necessarily lead to an immediate influx of new business, but it will make everyone aware of your commitment and achievement.

If you have independent certification, you could consider issuing a press release to local press or trade magazines, dependent on your type of business. If you are selling to other businesses, it is important your peers know what you have achieved. If you are selling locally, it will enhance your reputation and may help generate word-of-mouth recommendations.

Make the standard and what it achieves for your customers a central part of your sales story.

About BSI

BSI is the UK's National Standards Body, recognized globally for its independence, integrity and innovation in the production of standards and information products that promote and share best practice. BSI works with businesses, consumers and government to represent UK interests and to make sure that British, European and international standards are useful, relevant and authoritative. For further information please visit

www.bsigroup.com/britishstandards

BSI, is a global independent business services organization that inspires confidence and delivers assurance to customers with standards-based solutions. Originating as the world's first national standards body, the Group has more than 2,300 staff operating in more than 120 countries through more than 50 global offices. The Group's key offerings are:

- The development and sale of private, national and international standards and supporting information
- Second and third-party management systems assessment and certification
- Product testing and certification of services and products
- Performance management software solutions
- Training services in support of standards implementation and business best practice.

For further information, please visit

www.bsigroup.com



Find out more

Search for standards and buy them at www.bsigroup.com/shop

or call 020 8996 9001

Find an organization that can verify your compliance by visiting the United Kingdom Accreditation service (UKAS) website at www.ukas.com. Alternatively, telephone UKAS on 020 8917 8400

Find out how standards can help you comply with EU directives by visiting www.newapproach.org

Get involved in the development of standards by emailing the BSI Technical Committee Service Centre at csc@bsigroup.com or by calling **020 8996 7009**

To become a BSI member, call **020 8996 7002** or email membership@bsigroup.com. Membership tariffs can be viewed at: www.bsigroup.com/joinbsi

Kitemark is a registered trademark of BSI (The British Standards Institution).

© BSI Group 2009

The opinions expressed within this publication are not necessarily those of BSI or of the publisher. No liability can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted by any means or stored within any information-retrieval system without the written consent of the copyright owner.

If you are a small business, have you ever thought of the competitive edge that standards can give your firm? Whether you want to:

- boost the efficiency of your operation
- improve the quality of your products or services
- cut your costs and increase your profits
- attract and retain customers,

standards can help you meet your goals, cost-effectively.

In this straightforward guide from BSI, you will find out about what standards are, how they can meet the requirements of your small business and how you go about finding and using the standards that will work for you.

You will also hear from a wide variety of small businesses about how they have benefited from introducing a range of standards to their operation. From customer service to innovation and keeping afloat when things go wrong, standards can help you improve every aspect of your business operation.

The overriding message is clear – standards are good for business.

BSI Headquarters

389 Chiswick High Road London W4 4AL UK

Tel +44 (0)20 8996 9000

Fax +44 (0)20 8996 7400

www.bsigroup.com

© BSI copyright