



Growing in uncertain times

Small firms are the backbone of every healthy economy, often disrupting markets with their agility and innovation. However, they're more vulnerable to risk – especially when growing in an uncertain financial climate. Small business owners can use standards to promote growth, while protecting themselves from the unexpected. Here are three key areas to focus on – and the supporting standards – that will enable your small business to thrive.

1. Start with your people

Happy and satisfied employees are the most productive and creative. A healthy workplace culture helps establish trust and makes staff retention and recruitment easier.

ISO 45001 provides a framework to increase safety, reduce workplace risks and enhance health and wellbeing at work, enabling small firms to proactively improve their Occupational Health & Safety performance. Certification sends a clear message that you care about the wellbeing of your people, which acts to reduce absenteeism and staff turnover, while improving engagement and morale.

In addition, ISO 45003, which is currently under development, will focus on psychological health and safety at work. Beyond this, it's important to consider your facility management (FM) strategy. ISO 41001 ensures workers feel satisfied within their working environment.

Extend your team dynamic to external partners and stakeholders with ISO 44001 to improve

collaboration and generate benefits for everyone within your supply chain.

2. Build growth-ready quality and resilience

It's vital that SME owners build resilience and quality to protect their business from developing threats, turning potential risks into powerful opportunities for growth.

Consistent quality is a fundamental building block of resilience, as well as being essential for growth. ISO 9001 provides a framework for a dependable quality management system (QMS). It emphasises risk-based thinking to prepare for potential challenges.

The implications of a cyber-attack are vast for SMEs: it's been shown that 60 percent go out of business within six months after a breach.

Implement an information security management system using ISO 27001 (and the rest of the ISO 27000 series of standards).

From protecting stored information in the cloud, to training staff on how to avoid threats like



phishing, these standards ensure you'll always be able to safeguard your business.

Also, ISO 28000 enables business owners to assess security risks and implement controls across all providers in a supply chain.

3. Protect the environment and prosper

Your SME must consider its social and environmental impact – both from the reputational and efficiency perspectives.

Consumers are increasingly demanding that brands demonstrate transparent, ethical, operations – and punishing those which don't. Weave accountability into your operations using ISO 14001 to improve sustainability, and ISO 26000 for social responsibility.

Using standards like these, your SME can find a balance between economic and environmental sustainability, creating long-term benefits to safeguard the future of your business and wider society.

Summary:

- Small business owners can use standards to promote growth, while protecting themselves from the unexpected.
- First: invest in your team by making staff wellbeing a priority. Your employees will determine the pace and growth of your SME.

- Improve health and safety ISO 45001 for reduced absenteeism and improved engagement. ISO 41001 drives strategic FM practices to keep workers satisfied and operational costs down.
- Extend your team dynamic externally using ISO 44001 to build strong collaborative relationships that drive innovation and expansion.
- Second: embrace resilience and quality to protect your business from threats. Begin with ISO 9001 to develop a risk-based QMS that will equip you to face potential challenges.
- ISO 27001 helps you define an information security strategy which builds trust with both employees and customers.
- Build resilience in your supply chain with ISO 28000.
- Third: weave responsibility and accountability to the DNA of your small business.
- ISO 14001 helps to improve your organization's environmental performance while ISO 26000 enables you to operate in a socially responsible way.

For more information on how our standards help SMEs, visit:

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