



Novacraft's investment in standards ensures it is flexible enough to succeed in a highly competitive environment

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Debra Charles,
Founder and CEO of Novacraft

Certification benefits

- Assures clients of credibility and reliability
- Demonstrates commitment to quality
- Fulfils corporate mission of transparency and excellent customer service
- Provides competitive edge, helping to win business
- Helps to govern the protection of information
- Improves efficiencies and increases profits
- Brings flexibility and resilience
- Boosts environmental performance
- Helps to develop and manage interactions with other organizations

At a glance

Novacraft is a leading software development business, producing smartcards and smart technology for a range of clients in the transport, education, and charity sectors.

Since it was founded 17 years ago, Novacraft has been committed to standards, and it now holds certification to ISO 9001, BS 11000, ISO/IEC 27001 and ISO 14001. It regards standards as intrinsic to its makeup. They are an all-important element of its mission to improve and adapt to new markets and new environments – and fulfil its mission to make a real and lasting impact on society.

Customer background

Novacraft develops, implements, and manages smartcard programmes, online application systems and customer care services. With the objective of “taking smartcards to the next level”, it aims to make them not only easier for consumers to use, but also gives the organizations that operate them the chance to develop new opportunities and save costs.

By working with clients such as the Royal British Legion and Transport for London, Novacraft has shown how streamlining smartcard systems and moving online can result in lower administration costs, and time savings, particularly when it comes to application processing or membership management.

Why certification?

Founder and CEO of Novacraft, Debra Charles, explains why she embarked upon the standards route. “When I started the company 17 years ago it was just me,” she says. “I had ambitious plans, I needed to think big, but I also had to convince people about my product. Adopting standards gave me the credibility to do that.”

Quality management standard ISO 9001 came first in 2002, and more recently in 2014 the company secured certification to three standards all in one year: the British Standard for collaborative business relationships BS 11000; information security standard ISO/IEC 27001; and environmental management standard ISO 14001.

Of the many thousands of organizations certified by BSI, Novacraft has achieved all three standards in the shortest period of time, and is also one of only 100 companies so far in the UK to secure certification to BS 11000 – a standard that usually takes two years to implement, but which took Novacraft just seven months.

Implementation

With regard to ISO 14001 in particular, the main hurdle to overcome was one of perception. “We’re not a manufacturer so our staff couldn’t initially see the relevance of ISO 14001,” says Charles. “But now they understand the importance of focusing on the environmental aspects of the business,” she says. As a result, for example, the company has increased its recycled waste from 50% to 75% and reduced waste to landfill from 50% to 25%.

Energy management has also been tackled head on. An office move earlier this year was driven not only by the need for more space but also for energy efficiency, as Charles explains: “Part of our remit was to ensure our new office was fit for purpose in terms of adhering to ISO 14001 requirements. We needed a ‘smart’ office, where, for example, lights will automatically turn off in rooms that are unused for a certain amount of time.”

Although adopting standards requires effort from team members, Charles says there has been strong buy in from the team at Novacraft, with general acknowledgement that certification is a vital ingredient in the company’s success. “Standards actually make our lives easier,” says Charles, “and although they impact on team time and workload, the payback is clear to see.”

Benefits

That payback is evident in Novacraft’s 50% financial growth over the last three years, with a great deal of new business won. As Charles explains, “Without certification, we wouldn’t have won the contract with Royal British Legion, for example, and nor could we have bid recently for another very large piece of work.”

She continues, “Standards make our bids credible. With technology moving quickly,

we need to have robust systems in place and, for me, having standards is vital to maintaining that robustness.”

For Charles, commitment to certification is also about the removal of risk. “It enables me and my team to sleep at night, it gives our clients the comfort that we’re continuously improving and delivering on time. Having certification gives you ‘the badge’ that shows clients you can do it, and that gives them reassurance.”

BSI’s role

“Over the last decade, the collaboration we’ve enjoyed with BSI has been so valuable to the business,” says Charles. “I can speak openly with assessors about the challenges and opportunities we face. And they can provide that ‘helicopter’ view I need, focusing on areas for improvement, and helping us move forward.”

She has big growth plans for the company, which currently turns over more than £10m a year and aims to double in size financially by 2018. Her next goal is BS 65000, the new standard for Organizational Resilience, and she regards BSI as pivotal in achieving this – and more.

She concludes, “I think of standards as a smorgasbord of processes that give our company rigour. If we have that, we can springboard forward to the next level of our development, and we know that each new standard we acquire is adding to that corporate rigour and ultimately enabling Novacraft to make a real impact on society.”

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