What are the procedures of internal audit?

Internal audit conducts assurance audits through a five-phase process which includes selection, planning, conducting fieldwork, reporting results, and following up on corrective action plans.

8 Effective Steps to Perform an Internal Audit Successfully

1. Identify the Processes to be Audited. ...
2. Decide on the Frequency of the Audits. ...
3. Plan and Schedule the Audits. ...
4. Notify the People Involved. ...
5. Prepare the Audit Checklist and Execute Audit. ...
6. Record and Analyze Audit Findings. ...
7. Investigate to Develop and Implement Action Plans.

6 Key Steps for Performing an Internal Quality Audit

Few businesses realise the benefits they should from internal quality audits.

Often, auditing is viewed as an unwelcome but necessary disruption. It takes time and effort, and can leave employees feeling threatened. And once it's completed, not much changes.

This is a pity because internal audits are powerful tools. They can help businesses prepare for external audits and find real opportunities for improvement.

For more productive internal quality audits, follow these six basic steps. Also consult ISO 19011:2011, which provides standardised guidelines for auditing management systems.

1. Schedule regular audits

An audit should not come as a surprise. Internal audits should take place at regular intervals. How often should depend on things like the nature of your business and the risk levels of its processes.

Also, avoid scheduling audits for the busiest work times. This can create undue stress and resentment.

Include the dates for internal quality audits in the company's annual calendar. As an audit date approaches, send reminders to staff. This gives people time to prepare – collecting documents, preparing for interviews, confirming their accounting and so on.

2. Determine the scope of the audit

The quality manager, in consultation with team experts, is usually best placed to draw up criteria for an internal audit.

These should focus on risk areas in the process or business lifecycle. They should also include the entire workflow, to identify possible inefficiencies.

It's important that the criteria remain consistent over time, to the degree that this is possible and makes sense. This gives team members clear goals to work towards in between audits. It also makes it possible to assess performance over time.

However, criteria must also be flexible enough to suit your company's evolving processes.

3. Planning for the audit

Some pre-planning needs to happen before an internal quality audit takes place.

You'll need to appoint an auditor. This can be an employee who understands but isn't directly involved in the processes to be audited. Or it could be someone from outside the company, but who understands the business and industry standards.

Various employees usually participate in the audit. The process is much less stressful if they know what will be audited and how.

Identify the tasks and processes that each person will be audited on and how that information is to be presented.

Establish the format of the audit. This could include interviews, a review of process documentation, or a demonstration of the workflows.

A successful audit includes transparent communication about the content and format of the audit. It's also helpful if employees are allocated time to prepare for the audit.

4. Conducting the audit

To ensure maximum participation and cooperation, begin with a meeting to communicate the objectives of the audit to staff.

Also focus on eliminating fears of a witch hunt against non-performing team members. Encourage participants to share their own insights and suggestions for improvements.

Once the auditing process starts, allow the necessary time for the auditor to gain comprehensive insight into your company's business life cycle and workflows.

It's also useful to assess the organisation's quality management system to identify possible inconsistencies.

5. Reporting on the audit

The auditor's final report outlines the findings of the audit and makes recommendations for follow-up action.

It should equip management to track quality and performance over time, and identify areas for improvement.

Often, these reports aren't shared beyond upper management.

Instead, a synthesis of the findings should be communicated to the workforce, with clear focus areas for improvement.

At the same time, highlight successes in the team's processes since the last review. This can help keep employees motivated.

6. Acting on recommendations

This is the really important step. Show staff that quality and the auditing process do matter by acting on the findings.

Focus on one or two improvements at a time.

Regularly assess the results of the changes that are made and their impact.

Also, aim to involve employees in finding solutions to the auditor's recommendations. Having everyone play an active role is key to any continuous improvement effort. It's also vital for long-term compliance with quality standards.

How isoTracker can help with internal quality audits

isoTracker's cloud-based audit management software makes it quick and simply to construct, schedule and run internal audits.

Using the software, you can easily set up audit checklists (and use them in Excel), reuse audit templates, create audit reports, identify non-conformances, track corrective actions and review previous audit results.

Our auditing software is:

- modular – it can stand alone or integrate with our other quality management software
- cloud-based for easy access
- affordable and subscription-based.

Sign up for a free 60-day trial of isoTracker's quality management software or contact us to discuss your needs.