What does management review mean?

A management review is **a systematic assessment to 'measure the effectiveness of the organisations' management system**. ISO standards require management reviews because they ensure that management systems remain focused on the direction of the business and continual improvement.

A **certification audit** occurs when a company undergoes an audit by an ISO Registrar to ensure compliance of all elements of a specific standard. An ISO certificate references the scope of the registration issued to the company and includes a three-year expiration date. Certification audits are most often broken into two stages. A stage one audit is typically conducted remotely to determine if the organization is ready for a stage two audit. If the auditor determines the company has met the minimum criteria for the stage one audit, the company will proceed with an onsite stage 2 audit, which is much more in-depth and includes a document review, interviews, and work observances covering all elements of the standard.

Every year, a **surveillance audit** is conducted by the ISO Registrar. A surveillance audit is less intensive than the certification audit. It is a "snapshot" in time of the auditor's review to ensure the company is still meeting the key elements of the ISO standard. However, sometimes not every element will be reviewed during a surveillance audit. If there are any gaps, a nonconformance finding is documented and the company is responsible for addressing it to ensure ongoing certification.

A **recertification audit** occurs every three years from when the original certification audit was completed. During a three-year period, there are typically numerous organizational changes that happen within a company. Part of the recertification audit is to ensure that the Quality Management System (QMS) has assessed and documented these changes appropriately and implemented any necessary training. Another reason for a recertification audit is to ensure companies incorporate changes to their QMS when ISO standards are updated.

Whether your company is undergoing a certification, recertification, or surveillance audit, it is good practice and a company's responsibility to always be "audit ready." Next month's article will offer some important tips for ensuring audit readiness.

What is specific about a surveillance audit?

So, you are probably asking what the difference is between the surveillance **audit** and the certification/re-certification audits. All three are on-site audits done by the certification body, will have corrective actions issued that need to be addressed, and will have an audit report issued to your company as a record of the audit. The difference is the number of hours devoted to processes in the audit.

For the certification/re-certification audit, the certification body auditors will look at the implementation of every process within your **QMS** to check for conformance to the ISO 9001 standard, as well as your company documentation, process effectiveness, and continual improvement. This audit will often take several auditors many days to complete, depending on the size of your company and the number of processes within your QMS.

By comparison, the surveillance audit will spend less time on only some portions of your QMS processes, rather than everything. They will start each time by looking at your key processes (such as management review, internal audit, and **corrective actions**), and will then only look at some of the

remaining processes within your QMS. They may also only look at a portion of the whole organization, such as only one out of two production lines, or even only certain sites chosen by the auditors, rather than multiple sites. There is a recommended rule to use a square root of all possible locations; for example, if there were a total of 16 retail stores in the scope of the certification, then at least four should be audited in a surveillance audit.

Since the auditors will be spending less time on fewer of your QMS processes, these surveillance audits will take less time to perform than the original certification audit. The goal for the certification body is to audit all of the processes and business sites at least once within the QMS during the two-year surveillance cycle.

For some help on preparing for your initial certification audit, check out this blog post on **What questions to expect on the ISO 9001 certification audit**.

Don't lose sight of why you have certification body audits

Since the surveillance audit does not look at all processes, some people start to think that these audits are less important than the certification audit, but this is not the case. Just because the certification body won't spend much time auditing a specific process during an upcoming surveillance audit doesn't mean you can just ignore this process yourself. You still need to perform your internal audits for all processes as per your audit schedule, and make any corrections or improvements that you find necessary. It is also important to remember that if a major non-conformance found during a certification audit is not addressed, you can still lose your certification.

Your certification body audits are there to bring a different set of eyes on your processes than you would have for your internal audits. By having an outside observer, who has seen other companies and has different experiences than people in your company, you can find different improvement opportunities than you would if you only audited on your own. Use the information from your surveillance audit reports to help focus your improvements, but don't lose sight of other improvements you are making.

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