Six myths about ISO 45001 Certification

As you implement your Occupational Health & Safety Management System (OHSMS), you will find that ISO 45001:2018 Certification has many myths that surround it, and it can be hard to separate fact from fiction. In this article, we will look at the six most common myths surrounding ISO 45001, and try to explain what is true and what is not.

Myth 1: ISO 45001 Certification is only applicable to manufacturing.

While a manufacturing company may have more apparent hazards than an office, the standard is written to be used by any organization in any industry. The focus of the standard is to understand the legal requirements that are applicable to your particular organization and then use this knowledge to identify what hazards you have for your processes. There may be risks of falls in a warehouse, knife hazards in a kitchen setting, or tripping and shock hazards in the office. By understanding your specific hazards, you can then determine the risk posed as well as which hazards are most significant to improving the overall occupational health & safety (OH&S) performance of your organization.

Myth 2: ISO 45001 Certification isn't required if we are legally compliant.

Legal compliance is an important part of the OHSMS, but ISO 45001 goes beyond just being compliant to applicable laws and working toward improvement of your OH&S performance. The standard requires that you identify the legal requirements that are applicable to you, determine how you will keep up to date on these requirements, understand what you need to do to comply with these requirements, and then measure your ability to meet the requirements. However, the OHSMS focus on improving OH&S performance goes beyond just meeting legal requirements.

Myth 3: ISO 45001 Certification is only for "hazardous" organizations.

Any organization that wants to increase the OH&S performance of the company can use ISO 45001 OHSMS training to create an OHSMS to work on improvement. It is not just companies with many hazards that can use the plan-do-check-act method that is embedded in ISO 45001

to find incremental improvements that can, over time, reduce the OH&S hazards and improve the OH&S performance. A company can even realize cost savings through improvement activities.

Myth 4: ISO 45001 Certification is about creating a lot of unnecessary documents.

This is most certainly not true. While there is some documented information required by ISO 45001, the requirements of the standard are designed to help you understand how your processes affect your OH&S performance. Additionally, the requirements also help you understand how to implement worker consultation and participation. You need to maintain the records necessary to monitor, measure and control your processes, but these are determined by what you, as an organization, deem necessary (as well as taking into account your legal requirements).

Myth 5: ISO 45001 Certification won't add value and it will cost too much to implement.

Some people think that implementing ISO 45001, or any other management system, is just a paper exercise that will not provide benefits. But this is not necessarily the case. In the worst cases, some people think that implementing a management system will distract people from the core activities of their company, and lower the value of the company. When this type of person only implements ISO 45001 by writing a lot of documents and not actually creating a useful system, they end up being correct in what they had thought. If you are implementing a system only to satisfy other people's requirements, without making the system work for you, you will definitely get no value.
However, if you are implementing the OHSMS with a goal of designing a system that will help you to prevent accidents and ill health, find improvements, and make your overall processes better as each year goes by, you will find that there is a lot of value in the OHSMS. Using the management system to analyze and improve your processes, you will see great gains in the processes.

Myth 6: ISO 45001 Certification will stop us from being flexible and innovative.

The requirements of ISO 45001:2018 Certification are designed to be non-prescriptive, meaning that they identify the elements of a good OHSMS but do not detail how you will

accomplish these elements. For instance, the standard requires that you have some method for encouraging worker participation and consultation in the OHSMS, and gives you some important elements to include in your process. It does not, however, tell you exactly how you will make this happen in your company. Designing the right participation and consultation process that works for your organization is up to you.

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