

INFORMATION SHEET 2

Environmental Management Systems

Environmental Management Systems have their origins in Quality management. A number of standards for such systems have been developed. ISO14001 is perhaps the one that most people might have heard of. An Environmental Management System has a number of benefits, regardless of the size or nature of your organisation. Expected benefits from the implementation of an effective EMS would include, improved environmental performance by the organisation, reducing potential liability, increasing competitive effectiveness in the private sector. In addition such systems would reduce costs, lead to fewer accidents or pollution incidents and improve the public image of the organisation concerned.

In addition to the “environmental” benefits such systems would also help to develop staff, enhance customer, client or supporter trust and underline that your organisation is a sector leader. It will help your organisation towards the goal of long term viability and sustainability, keeping existing supporters/customers and attracting new ones. In addition to all these benefits, a correct attitude and approach to the environment is the right one for all you work with and for.

As with any investment there is of course a cost, however these costs which are largely measurable in terms of time, training and possible consultancy assistance are testified by many organisations around the world to be sensible investments in the future effectiveness of your organisation.

If your organisation already is committed to concepts such as quality management there may be a lot of synergy between the structures that have been constructed towards these aims and Environmental Management. The key principle to keep in mind is that of continual improvement.

As mentioned ISO14001 is one of the key EMS models, however additional models also exist including the European Unions Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the Environment Protection Agency (USEPA) Performance Track and the Code of Environmental Management Principles for Federal Agencies. However common to all of these are the key components of such a system which include

- Development of an Environmental Policy
- Planning, Legal Requirements, Objectives and Targets
- Implementation, Responsibility, Training, Document Control, Other
- Auditing
- Management Reviews
- Continual Improvement through feedback

Regardless of how well these components are crafted within your organisation there are a number of key concepts that need to be fully embraced if any environmental management system is to be successful. The importance of making the environment an organisational priority is key, as is the integration of that priority across the organisation. Widespread buy in from the staff of that organisation is also key as is the need for the management system to be sensitive to the culture of the organisation in question. The good news is that many organisation have many of the structures and expertise that is needed already in place.

There is almost no end of information available on the internet and many organisations use consultants to assist them in implementing and developing an environmental management system. This can be very helpful, however there is often already a lot of in house knowledge that should be accessed, consultants should bring added value to this, rather than asking them to develop such a system in isolation. Consultants can also be good at researching what other organisations are doing, so you don't have to re invent the wheel. Always check that the consultant you use is an accredited environmental professional.

In conclusion, an Environmental Management System is a cycle of planning, implementing, reviewing and improving the processes, actions, structure and mechanisms that an organisation uses to meet its local, national and global obligations to the environment.

For Further Information You can look at

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) website specifically devoted to EMS issues <http://www.epa.gov/ems/> This site offers a great deal of useful generic information.

Information relating to the ISO accreditation standard can be found at <http://www.iso14000-iso14001-environmental-management.com/>

Information relating to the European Environmental Management Standard <http://www.emas.org.uk/aboutemas/mainframe.htm>

Society for the Environment website, provides useful general links into the various professional environmental bodies. It is also the society that issues the Chartered Environmentalist benchmark, of which Promise Consulting is signed up to <http://www.socenv.org.uk/home>

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