

Compliance or intent

Being ISO 9000 certified should be an indicator of doing good businesses and standardizing performance; however, for the longest time – it wasn't.

BY CLIFF WILLIAMS



A few years ago, speaking with the team that had helped develop the ISO 55000 Asset Management Systems Standard Suite, it was asked who they thought would be interested in certifying to the standard.

Surprisingly, one of them said that they really weren't concerned about it. During the discussion, he explained that he was involved with many organizations that certified to various ISO standards and found himself very disappointed with their performance and approach. It seemed to him that the goal of certifying was being able to 'fly the flag' proudly on their buildings, not actually using the standards to help drive improvements.

This took me back to my experience with the early days of ISO 9000 and the mad scramble to become certified. At that time, being ISO 9000 certified was becoming the price of admission for doing business, if you wanted to be

a preferred or qualified supplier, you had to be 9000 certified. This should have been a good indicator of businesses improving and standardizing their performance; however, for the longest time – it wasn't.

Organizations took the standard to mean that they should document what they intended to do and then prove that they were doing it – even if what they were doing was making an inferior product. The point that the standard was supposed to give the organization a consistent basis on which to build and improve their performance was missed, as the question that organizations were really interested in answering was "Are you ISO 9000 certified?"

ISO 9000 developed over the years, but by that time many organizations no longer saw the value in being certified, and didn't do more than what was required by the audit to continue certification. Compliance to the

standard's requirements had missed on the intent of the standard.

Today, we see different uptake in the ISO 55000 suite around the world. In Canada there has been more activity, with Ontario producing O.Reg. 588/17 Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure.

This regulation was enacted with the intent that municipalities would take a structured approach to managing their assets and making best use of the grants, taxes, and other funding. While also providing value to their stakeholders by ensuring their processes and procedures were the most effective and efficient they could be.

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The submission date for the initial core asset plans has passed and if you visit most municipality web sites you will find a link to their asset management plan (AMP). While everything seems to be in place, at least to meet the requirement of the regulation; however, when digging deeper, it becomes apparent that the AMPs are not quite what they appear.

What has happened in most municipalities is that to comply with the regulation they have taken a snapshot in time and considered that as the basis for the plan. This might seem the obvious way to go but much like the



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early days of ISO 9000, there is no evaluation as to whether what you are doing today or the results you are getting today, are the right ones.

Having seen instances where there is not sufficient data to support what is reported, other than an opinion, or instances where one or two people have produced these AMPs with scant involvement from asset owners, or instances where asset owners very quickly abdicate any responsibility for providing meaningful data or developing meaningful processes.

When we look at how this situation can exist, we often find that those close to the top of the organization feel the same way, and when asked about their role in driving sustainable asset management they openly admit that they tend to defer to the asset management department for understanding.

O.Reg. 588/17 missed out on what were the most important points of ISO 55000 suite, and that was the influence of leadership and culture on the success of any sustainable, holistic asset management endeavours. What happened is that municipalities continue to behave the way they have always behaved, do the things the way they always did them, live with the culture they have always had, which ended up with the results that prompted the introduction of O.Reg. 588/17 to correct this.

There has been good work done by good people to produce these AMPs, but once again we have fallen into the trap of the

goal being to meet compliance at the expense of intent.

The interesting sidebar to this is many of those municipalities who are not covered by the O.Reg. have recognized the need for leadership and culture influence and have worked on those as the basis for building their AMPs.

Therefore, it seems when organizations must comply, they tend to see nothing else other than the certification. They

must comply but not viewing it from the perspective of intent does not lead where the compliance is meant to. This can permeate through organizations where people do the same thing at department level, take the favourite maintenance KPI of PM compliance and achieve certification. However, equipment is still breaking down because they are the wrong PMs or are being done incorrectly.

Cliff Williams is author of the bestselling maintenance novel *People – A Reliability Success Story*. He is a maintenance and asset management educator, and a keynote speaker at conferences worldwide, who believes success is achieved through people. Currently, he shares his knowledge and experience as an advisor on maintenance and reliability for people and processes, and asset management with TMS asset management and is a facilitator for PEMAC's Asset Management Program.



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