Quality Assurance:

Documenting and Improving your Firm's Workflows

The basics of ISO 9001 certification and how to maximize the benefits of certification

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Main objectives of this presentation:

- To assist you in making an informed decision about whether or not you should consider implementing ISO 9001 in your firm
- If you decide to implement ISO 9001; what will it entail and what benefits can you expect
- If you decide that ISO 9001 is not for your firm; which of the fundamental principles of the ISO 9001:2015 Standard you may want to implement in your firm as management tools

The bad news: It is going to get worse…

Will ISO 9001 automatically improve the quality of your firm's output

The human factor and its importance in an IP firm

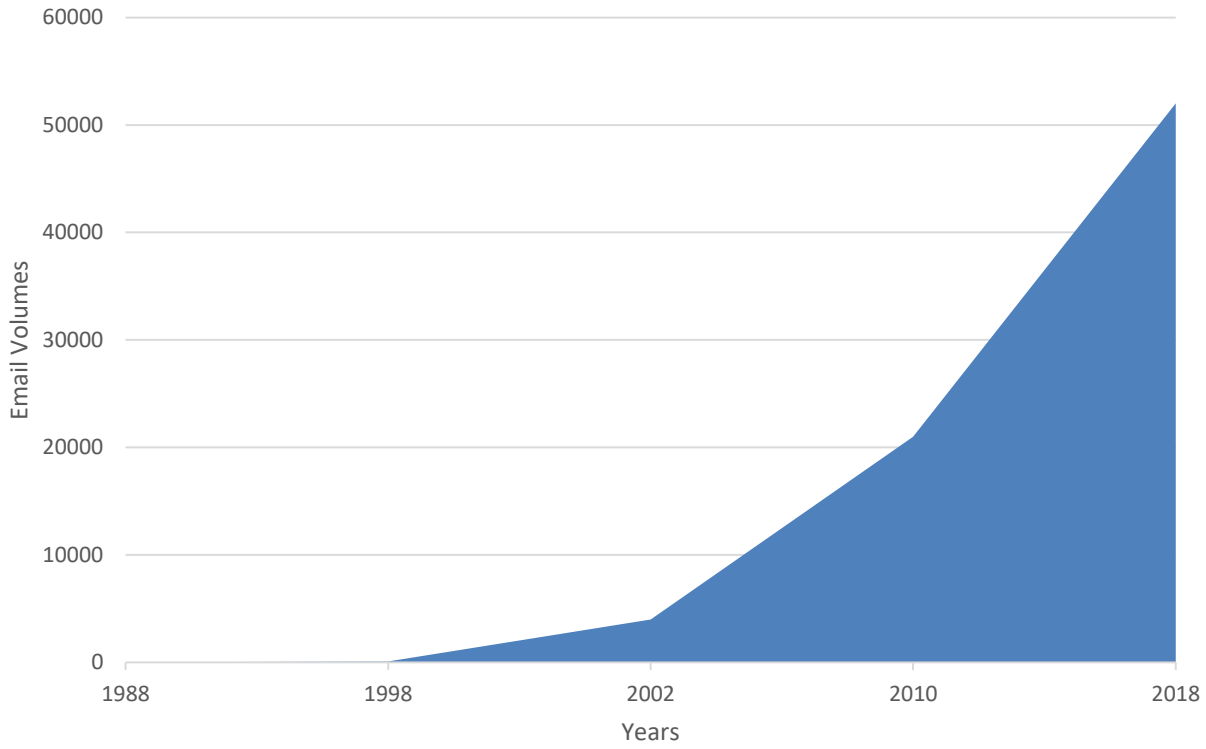
Why is quality and maintaining sanity a bigger problem than 30 years ago?

E-mail monster – my experience

- 30 years ago: No email
- 20 years ago: Introduction to email
- 16 years ago: Total emails per year: 4,000 (±20 per day)
- 8 years ago: Total emails per year: 21,000 (±1 email every 5 minutes)
- 2018: Total emails per year: 52,000 (±1 email every 2 minutes)

Why is quality and maintaining sanity a bigger problem than 30 years ago?

E-mail monster – my experience



The challenges to maintain quality in an IP law firm will intensify at all levels

- Procedural Quality:

Increased volumes and speed. IT, AI and systems help but comes with their own challenges

- Technical Quality:

Less time for doing quality professional work

Your Firm's Quality Management System

ISO 9001, will it necessarily result in improved quality?

- It should but not necessarily
- The difference is;
- Your Quality Management System becomes better organised with a focus on **continual improvement**
- You are **forced to apply management time** and resources with regular meetings to maintaining and **improving** your firm's Quality Management System

ISO 9001, will it necessarily result in improved quality? (continued)

- In terms of the ISO Standard the **root cause of problems** has to be identified to avoid the same problem happening again. This has a great long-term effect on the mindset of staff regarding quality
- It is not about the end result only (quality)
- The main focus is the **ongoing management** of your firm's Quality Management System.

Fundamentals of the ISO 9001:2015 Standard – Quality Management System

- Risk based thinking;
- Leadership;
- Performance evaluation;
- Root cause: identification of problems;
- Communication;
- Continuous improvement; and
- Establishment of objectives.

Risk based thinking

Leadership


COMMITMENT
TRAINING
SKILLS
LEADERSHIP
TEAM
MANAGEMENT
COMMITMENT
INNOVATION
STRENGTH
DIRECTING
PHILOSOPHY
BUSINESS
MISSION
CONDUCT
RISK
GROUP
EMOTIONAL
LEADER
SOLUTION
COLLABORATION
MEMBER
ABILITY
RESPECT
TRUST
GOAL
VISION
COMMERCE
PEOPLE
DISCIPLINE
COMPETENCE
POWER
TEAMWORK
SUCCESS

Performance evaluation

- Internal audit
- Management review meetings
- External audits: Conducted by the ISO Certification Body

Root cause: identification of problems and opening of development files

Communication

- How to keep everybody on the same page
- Minutes of management review meetings
- Maintaining of Work Instruction Manuals
- Updating of Work Instruction Manuals
- Ad-hoc email communications
- In a growing firm this is a real challenge

Continuous improvement

- Fundamental to the ISO process and external audit
- Opening of development files
- Corrective action
- Reviewing of effectiveness of corrective actions

Establishment of objectives

- For the firm
- For each department
- Regular review and updating

Implementing ISO 9001 in a new firm

- 2007: Establishment of Firm and ±10 employees
- 2010: Obtained ISO 9001 certification and ±20 employees
- 2019: No intention to drop certification and now ±85 employees

Implementation

- One partner took ownership of ISO 9001 implementation
- The partner visited an ISO 9001 certified IP firm for a few days
- It took approximately 6 months to put together the firm's ISO Quality System Manual (QSM) with input by other partners

Duties of ISO Partner

- Chair management review meetings at planned intervals and review the agenda and minutes received from the ISO Officer
- Oversee changes to procedures to ensure continuous improvement and communicating these changes firm-wide
- ISO Certification Body main contact person
- Time commitment of the ISO Partner on ISO related issues: ±3 working days per annum

Duties of ISO Officer

- Monitors development files and follows up on the progress thereof with the responsible parties at regular intervals
- Prepares agendas, annexures and detailed minutes of management review meetings
- Conducts internal audits, prepares internal audit reports and provides recommendations to the ISO Partner
- Time commitment of the ISO Officer on ISO related issues: ± 20 working days per annum

ISO Management Review Meetings

- Management review meetings takes place every six months and lasts ±3 hours per meeting
- It is attended by the managing partner, ISO partner, ISO officer, IT/office manager, heads of patent and trademark departments and 1 secretary from each department

ISO Certification Body Audits (“ISO Auditors”)

- An external audit is conducted by the ISO Auditors annually, based on a 3 year audit cycle plan.
- 1st audit in cycle: (Re-)Certification audit (2 days)
- 2nd audit in cycle: Surveillance audit 1 (1 day)
- 3rd audit in cycle: Surveillance audit 2 (1 day)
- Attended by the managing partner, ISO Partner and ISO Officer

Benefits that we received through ISO

- Created a quality culture among staff
- Identifying the root cause of problems and ongoing improvement approach at all levels in the firm
- Development files remain open until the task has been completed
- Full transparency in quality initiatives between different departments resulting in uniformity
- Forced to have ISO management review meetings at regular intervals
- ISO audits keep you on your toes

Negatives

- Upfront time investment
- Time and admin intensive: Must keep long and very detailed minutes to satisfy the ISO Auditors
- ISO Auditors does not have experience in IP firms and can therefore not contribute with proposals and suggestions to improve quality
- Relatively easy to convince external ISO Auditors that all is in order which can result in complacency

You don’t have to reinvent the wheel

- Learn from an existing ISO certified IP firm
- You will find that you probably already have many procedures in place within your firm
- These existing procedures only needs to be adapted to a uniform standard
- Put in place an umbrella ISO Quality Management System as set out above

Thank You

Questions?

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