ISO 45001: The New Gold Standard Of Workplace Safety

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I. Introduction

Every company or business throughout the world is constantly looking for a program or innovation that will give them an edge or advantage over their competition. In many cases, it is that edge or advantage that may spell the difference in success or failure, profitability or bankruptcy, operational excellence or status quo, etc. Such edge or advantage that dramatically enhances competitive advantage does not come along very often, but when it does, the companies that recognize and adopt this edge or advantage achieve greater profitability and market share over their competitors. ISO 45001 provides this once in a generation edge and advantage that cutting edge companies will quickly utilize.

II. An Overview Of The New Standard

A. What You Need To Know About ISO 45001

The International Organization for Standardized (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental international organization that, through its members, brings together experts to share knowledge and develops voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant international standards that support innovation and provide solutions to challenges faced by businesses throughout the world. ISO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has approximately 163 national standard bodies. ISO has published approximately 22,480 international standards, many of which involve best practices management systems. ISO international standards are intended to ensure that business operations, products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality. They provide businesses with specific tasks and procedures that assist in reducing costs, improving safety and health and increasing productivity while minimizing error and waste.

Safety and health experts from around the globe came together to develop what is being called the 'gold standard' in safety and health risk management. The new ISO 45001 standard will

allow companies to significantly enhance its safety and health program, reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, dramatically improve employee productivity and quality which leads to increased profitability. More than 70 countries participated in the development of the ISO 45001 standard. It is the new international consensus and certification standard for occupational safety and health, and it is also ANSI recognized

ISO 45001 takes a unique approach to safety and health risk management. The new standard places a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of top levels of management. Under the framework of ISO 45001, top management will be responsible to create, facilitate, maintain, evaluate, and promote the safety and health management system. Using the top down approach, the ISO 45001 standard will drive safety into the culture and everyday operations of the business. In addition to management's role, ISO 45001 requires worker involvement in the decision making and evaluation processes.

The standard also requires to consider the safety risks at the worksite that impacts "other interested parties" which include, contractors, vendors, suppliers and even the public, passers-by and neighbors. By achieving ISO 45001 certification, companies holding ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 certification will ensure the company's Occupational Safety and Health management system (OH&S MS) is aligned and fully integrated with other existing management systems.

ISO 45001 provides the specifications and guidance to enhance the performance of every company's safety and health program. ISO 45001 was developed to be applicable to any organization regardless of size, type and nature. All of its requirements were developed to ensure that they could be integrated into any company's management process.

B.   What About Companies Holding Current ISO, OSHAS, VOO, Or Other Certifications?

Companies currently holding an ISO certification will have a distinct advantage when it comes to implementing ISO 45001. The new ISO 45001 standard uses the same Annex SL framework utilized in ISO 9001 or ISO 14001. As a result, companies currently ISO certified will be very familiar with procedures related to implementation, documentation, and auditing.

The British based safety management certification standard, OSHAS 18001 is currently used in approximately 130 countries worldwide. However, with the development and adoption of ISO 45001, it has been determined that ISO 45001 will replace OSHA's 18001. OSHAS 18001 will expire in 2021. Companies currently certified under the OSHAS 18001 standard should begin preparing to change to the ISO 45001 standard requirements.

Companies that are currently operating as an OSHA VPP site will also have an advantage when it comes to implementing ISO 45001. As a VPP site, the commitment of top management already exists. The company is already focused on minimizing employee injuries and illnesses. ISO 45001 will help companies become even more proactive when it comes to employee safety.

C.   **What Are The Major Changes With ISO 45001?**

With the implantation of the Annex SL framework, when compared to OSHA's 18001 or other OH&S MS, ISO 45001 places a greater emphasis on planning, operational support, and management and worker participation, performance evaluation, and continuous improvement. ISO 45001 is designed to identify and abate job hazards prior to an accident. Increasing management and worker participation is the foundation for increasing workplace safety.

III. Benefits Of Obtaining ISO 45001 Certification

The benefits of ISO 45001 certification are numerous. Some of the most common reasons you may choose to obtain this safety certification milestone include the positive impact on

corporate culture, cost saving initiatives, increased productivity, enhanced quality, and positive public image.

Injuries are costly. ISO 45001 will significantly drive operational competiveness and internal process improvement. Many companies may find that obtaining the ISO 45001 certification will help expand the customer base or market share. Businesses at the top of the supply chain are also pushing the ISO 45001 certification down to vendors and suppliers in the supply chain. Many companies will require their business partners, including their suppliers and contractors to be ISO 45001 certification in order to continue to work for them.

IV. Moving Forward Toward Certification

The first step to be taken on the ISO 45001 certification journey is to determine if the company wants to achieve great and even world-class safety at its facilities. The next steps to ISO 45001 implementation will be to conduct the required gap assessment audit, develop an action plan for improvement, eliminate the gaps identified and provide the onsite resource to successfully complete the ISO 45001 certification audit. Utilizing these steps will assist a company to meet its sustainability goals, improve productivity, increase profitability, and enhance corporate image in the minds of investors, clients and/or customers.