



ISO to publish book on integrated use of management system standards

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In the first quarter of 2008, ISO is to publish a book giving organizations advice on how to make integrated use of management system standards. This article explains the background to the project and previews the book, *Integrated use of management system standards*.

ISO management system standards (MSS), such as ISO 9001:2000 for quality management and ISO 14001:2004 for environmental management, are among the most widely used international standards.

Contrary to many other types of standard, management system standards cover multiple aspects, levels and functions of an organization and therefore their implementation usually has quite an impact on how an organization operates and manages its business processes.

In addition, a rapidly increasing number of organizations is applying not only one, but a range of management system standards to satisfy their own needs as well as those of external stakeholders. Given these three trends, the compatibility of these standards has been a major concern both for the user community and for



The cover of ISO's forthcoming book *Integrated use of management system standards*.

the ISO technical committees developing MSS. Compatibility is usually defined as "suitability of standards for use together under specific conditions to fulfil relevant requirements without causing unacceptable interactions" (ISO/IEC Guide 2).

The development of compatible ISO management systems standards has been supported by active liaison and coordination between the technical committees involved, as well as by the development and application of ISO Guide 72, *Guidelines for the justification and development of management system standards*.

Background

Despite all these efforts by ISO and its working groups to provide user-friendly and compatible standards, organizations frequently struggle with the combined or integrated use of, for example, ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. This has led in the past to calls for a single, integrated or generic standard for a management system that can be applied to manage "all significant aspects or risks" of an organization.

However, there are a number of serious disadvantages to such an approach and up to now there has not been a sufficient level of support within ISO for the development of a generic management system standard.

An increasing number of organizations is applying a range of management system standards

But as a response to those organizations that encounter difficulties when applying multiple management system standards, the ISO members for the Netherlands (NEN) and France (AFNOR) proposed the development of an

ISO book to help these organizations. This initiative was approved and supported by the ISO Technical Management Board.

A task force was established under the leadership of Petra Eckl of MLPC International, France, and comprised 16 members representing a wide range of countries and business sectors, as well as standards bodies and academia. Work on the project was launched in September 2004 and the book is to be published by ISO in the first quarter of 2008 with the title of *Integrated use of management system standards*.

Basic assumptions

It is important to understand some basic assumptions underlying the development of the book.

Firstly, it is acknowledged that there is a market need for separate management system standards addressing different aspects, issues or risks that organizations need to manage. Therefore, the book does not attempt to describe what a generic management system or standard could look like. It provides guidance on how organizations can apply the different standards in a combined way, integrated with their business processes.

Secondly, it is noted that all organizations already have a management system. Although this is not necessarily formalized or documented, all organizations somehow manage their way of doing business, providing products or services to their customers and achieving objec-