

ISO 9001 Certification Has Big Impact on Small Businesses

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BACKGROUND

Island SMT is a small business providing service and support to the electronic manufacturing sector, offering spare parts and repair services for printed circuit assembly and in-circuit testing equipment. Staying on their customers' Approved Vendor List (AVL) is crucial to keeping the lights on and providing a livelihood for all eight employees.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

As a small business owner, Chris Hornung knows the importance of being ISO 9001:2008 certified. Because ISO 9001:2008 sets criteria for a quality management system, being certified means customers get consistent, good quality products and services. Without this audit and certification by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL), customers would take their business elsewhere. Island SMT needed to work with an auditor who understood how being removed from even one customer's AVL would impact the bottom line.

INITIAL APPROACH AND RESULTS

Chris Hornung, president of Island SMT, had been through customer, government, and ISO audits before he was familiar with how nerve-racking and stressful

this process could be. "What will the auditor want to know? Will they be personable and friendly, or stern and demanding?" Preparing for an auditor's visit can wear on the nerves of employees, who may or may not be aware of how an assessment will impact their company and their job.

TUV Rheinland makes a point to treat every company—and every customer—as an individual concern. There is no off-the-shelf, 'one size fits all' approach to audits and certification. This became obvious to Mr. Hornung from the first time he called TUV Rheinland: "At the beginning of 2014 we were not getting the support from our previous certification provider, so we contacted TUV Rheinland. My first conversations with the sales team were during some travel, when I had limited access and many distractions. But they were accommodating and patient—very professional. They were able to understand very quickly what our situation was and where we needed to go." As a first step, a TÜV Rheinland auditor visited Island SMT in the Spring of 2014 to perform a readiness review audit. The goal of that preliminary assessment was to identify gaps in the management system and to decide upon the next steps in the certification process. If quality management documentation does not fulfill the requirements of the standard at this stage, TUV

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INITIAL APPROACH AND RESULTS CONT.

Rheinland works with the company to get them up to speed on what is necessary to continue on in the process.

Because of Island SMT's prior auditing experience, the readiness audit was a success and the formal ISO certification audit came next. Of that audit, Hornung recalls, "In 2014, we had some small concerns that we would have a couple of non-conformances. Also, would my staff all be able to speak our quality system language?" It turned out they could, and two non-conformance issues were turned into corrective actions and resolved.

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