



ADAPTING ISO 9001 IMPLEMENTATION FOR MICROENTERPRISES: THE CASE OF DESERTI MECCANICA

Thanks to the European “ADAPT” program an 8-people company achieved ISO 9001 status and maintains a zero-defect result for 3 years in a row.

The ISO 9001 type of Standards are applicable to all size enterprises but the large companies really adapted the system first. They have applied that Quality Management System over the past 10-15 years and have invested large sums of money to get that fully implemented. The small enterprise is eager to follow suit as the Quality Management Systems (usually indicated by QM) are now so widely applied and the advantages well proven. But the high cost in money and time does not make it easy to apply it.

The cost of not being ISO 9001 certified becomes very high for the SME, because:

1. He risks losing the large customers.
2. It stops him from export business as the recall of defective products is prohibitive in cost.
3. Using ISO 9001 QM Systems usually leads to cost savings.
4. Last but not least, European Directive 85/374 puts the legal responsibility of defects on the producer when the product leaves the plant. This directive implies the use of ISO 9001 QM.

All this translates in risks and cost disadvantages for the Craft and Small Enterprise. Hence the need to get a good quality management system compliant with ISO 9001 installed whatever the size of the company may be.

The European Social Fund and the Italian Ministry of Work and Social Affairs decided to finance a project in the framework of “ADAPT” called “Vademecum della Qualità” in 1995. The objective was to develop and apply an ISO 9001 compliant Quality Management System for small enterprises. They provided a budget around 1 Million Euro over 4 years. This development project was done by Macrosistemi, Italy, with participation of the CAFOC education body in France and the Greek Athens Chambers of Commerce and Industry. There were around 40 (micro) industry partners in these countries of which a major one is Deserti Meccanica, San Lazzaro di Savena (Bologna), Italy.

A Quality System approach has to be based on very defined, objective criteria. It is applied throughout the company, in each section of activity, so all employees must understand the company process and its quality arguments fully. They must be at ease in using Quality Management and so recognise quality issues in their area of competence. Usually it takes much education and considerable volumes of literature requiring QM specialists to apply it, a function not available within an 8-people company.

The novelty of the Macrosistemi SME Quality Management System approach is that all elements of quality are compiled in one single Quality Vademecum book. A Quality System Education based on this Vademecum has been given to every employee of the company and on such a level that they can use that Quality System in a consistent way everywhere in the Deserti Meccanica company. The wording and the paperwork is adapted to the size and the needs of such a Micro-Enterprise. So everybody has a clear understanding of what is required and they achieve a perfect Quality Management, starting from the part suppliers down to the shipper of the ready made products.

Deserti Meccanica used the Vademecum so successfully that they are ISO 9001 certified by TUV since 1997. More important, over the last 3 years of applying the system, they achieved a zero-defect result. *No* defective product has left the plant! Deserti Meccanica successfully exports to the USA, Europe and the Far East and has grown employment from 5 to 8 persons. They are now extensively visited by companies from around the world, like from China or South America and a lot of European countries. In its own small way it contributes to the success of the European Enterprise.