QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SERVICES

**An ISO 9000 Workbook
for Small Professional Service Firms**

MAKING THE DECISION: Is ISO 9000 for You?

MAKING THE DECISION: Applying for Registration

PLANNING YOUR APPROACH: Orientation

PLANNING YOUR APPROACH: Work Plan

PLANNING YOUR APPROACH: Communications

DESIGNING YOUR QUALITY SYSTEM: Quality Policy

DESIGNING YOUR QUALITY SYSTEM: Gap Analysis

MANAGING DOCUMENTATION: Quality Records

MANAGING DOCUMENTATION: Process Audit

MANAGING DOCUMENTATION: Document Control

GETTING REGISTERED: Document Review

GETTING REGISTERED: Auditing Yourself

GETTING REGISTERED: Preparing for Audit

GETTING REGISTERED: On-Site Audit

AFTER REGISTRATION: Visibility

AFTER REGISTRATION: Surveillance

AFTER REGISTRATION: Continuous Improvement

As publicity about "ISO 9000" increases, professional service firms will need to decide whether or not to allocate scarce resources to the registration process. This workbook is intended for small professional service firms (accountants, architects, engineers, lawyers, management consultants, etc.), especially those who are managed by owners and are too small to have separate quality assurance (QA) or marketing departments — i.e., firms of up to 15 employees.

Clients in Canada are beginning to require that their services suppliers be registered to an ISO 9000 standard, though government procurement practices in countries like Australia already intend to require such registration later in their "roll-out" process. If you can answer "NO" to the following questions:

- ▸ Do you provide services to governmental agencies in Canada or abroad?
- ▸ Do you provide services to major international corporations?
- ▸ Do you provide services to suppliers of the auto industry?
- ▸ Do you provide services to firms registered to an ISO 9000 standard?

then ISO 9000 registration is probably not critical for your firm at this time. If you answered "yes" to one or more of the questions, you may find that pressure for registration will come first from manufacturing clients who themselves supply clients (governments or major corporations) that require registration ... and who must then attest that their suppliers meet ISO 9000 quality assurance system standards. One of the easiest ways to meet this requirement will be for such clients to restrict their dealings to suppliers that are already registered. While a long-term client can always justify using your services based on past satisfactory service, you may find that larger, registered clients begin to shift their work to your competitors who are registered.

Preparing for the registration process is complex, and the registrar's fees are not insignificant. The biggest investment that you will need to make, though, is in staff time and training. As a small firm, it is unlikely that you have a lot of spare staff time to address the quality control changes needed, especially if you do not already have a formal quality assurance system in place. Consultants, while available, can be costly; and the structure of your quality assurance system will need to be determined by you and your staff. This workbook makes use of our experience at Service-Growth Consultants Inc. (plus that of architectural, engineering, and inspection/testing firms) in translating the wording of ISO 9000 standards into the realities of a professional service firm's daily operations to provide you with a tool to streamline your own registration process.

This workbook is based on the 1994 revisions to the ISO 9000 standards and guidelines; however, it has been structured to continue to be useful as ongoing modifications occur. A description of the ISO 9000 documents you will need to order is given in Appendix A, and additional resources are listed in Appendix B.

In order to help you as a small professional service firm, there are several assumptions that have influenced the design of the workbook:

▸ Staff time is probably your scarcest resource and so needs to be focused effectively.

▸ While senior management must be involved throughout the process, your highest "biller" (probably also the manager) needs to be involved only at the most critical points.

▸ You may have little formal documentation of quality assurance procedures.

▸ You will want to minimize the additional documentation you have to develop for compliance, and build on the documentation structure you already have in place.

▸ Providing you with sample questionnaires, memos, etc., can help reduce your workload.

The workbook's practical tools (questions, checklists, and planning guides) are focused on the types of internal decisions and discussions needed in order to have in place an acceptable quality assurance system and ensure that the ISO 9000 registration process provides real value-added for your firm. The tools have been designed to streamline your own internal process, not to force a pre-designed quality assurance system.

At the end of this workbook, there is a feedback form for your use once you have completed the registration process. Please fax it to:

<div align="center">Industry Canada at 613-952-9054</div>

Purpose:	Orient the user to the structure of the workbook
To Be Read By:	All users of the workbook
Total Time Needed:	5 minutes

If your firm is a professional service firm, this workbook will help you to apply standards worded for the structure of manufacturing processes to the professional services environment. The rest of this workbook is structured in seven sections, plus informational appendices:

- ▸ ISO 9000: A Synopsis
- ▸ Making the Decision
- ▸ Planning Your Approach
- ▸ Creating Your Quality System
- ▸ Managing Documentation
- ▸ Getting Registered
- ▸ After Registration

The workbook starts with a very brief overview of ISO 9000 as an international quality assurance framework and focuses on what is left out of most materials, namely:

- ▸ Applying ISO 9000 concepts in a professional service firm
- ▸ Issues in creating the necessary quality assurance system in a small firm

Each section is designed as a do-it-yourself series of questions and exercises. At the beginning of the section, there is an indication of how long you will need to devote on average to the issues in the section and who (at a minimum) should be involved. There are, of course, staff activities that will need to take place "between" some of the sections ... most notably the work on documentation, training sessions, and the internal audits. Each section's exercises are designed to result in tangible outcomes that move you forward in the registration process. Note: Where sample memos, etc., say "9001/2/3", you will need to substitute 9001, 9002, or 9003 (the standard you have selected for registration).

● HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Before you become discouraged by trying to relate the "standards language" to your daily business, here are some of the terminology substitutions that will help:

Customer	→	Client
Supplier	→	Your firm
Product	→	Service
Tender	→	Proposal
Order	→	Request for service
Subcontractor	→	Vendors,subcontractors,associates
Customer-supplied product	→	Documents or materials from your client
Test equipment	→	[will not apply unless you have items requiring calibration]
Servicing	→	Retainer arrangements, updating
Statistical techniques	→	Performance measures

There are also certain standards whose interpretation registrars will adapt for small firms (see Appendix C).

You should be sure to make use of the resources in the Appendices to get current information on such things as accredited registrars (see Appendix D), international accreditation bodies (see Appendix E), publications and on-line information sources (see Appendix B), who is requiring ISO 9000 registration (see Appendix F), where you can get help (see Appendix G), and so on.

If you take the time to work together as a staff on the material in this Workbook, you will find that efficiencies begin to emerge and staff morale increases. It's always nice to know you're doing your work better and better.