

**Quality**

*Distance Learning Workbook*

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# 1. Introduction and background

During a tendering process, quality is a key selection criterion. The public sector has a critical role to play in ensuring quality of service alongside value for money.

Public sector customers (i.e. all of us) have a clear expectation of quality although our definitions of it may vary!

This workbook has been written to ensure that you understand the typical quality requirements of the public sector and what this can mean for your business.

Whilst each workbook covers a particular topic, they are interlinked. For example, good customer care arrangements are common to the ability to deliver, equal opportunities and quality.

In a tender situation, the purchasing organisation can only assess quality based on the *written* submission of the bidder. Thus it is vital that bidders show on paper how they maintain their quality standards that is, their quality management system.

## Definition

### Quality management system

Processes and procedures to ensure that quality is properly managed.

Throughout the main part of the workbook there are opportunities to reflect on what you have read and what this may mean for your business. It is important that you complete as many of the activities as you can as they have been designed to help you move towards successfully competing for public sector contracts.

The material and activities should be thought provoking and challenging. If you have a procurement mentor, they can help you to plan how best to address the issues that the text and activities have identified.

We recommend that you spend a total of at least half a day (3.5 hours) working on this module.

## 2. Aims and objectives of workbook

It is critical to the effective delivery of public services that there is an increase in the understanding of 'quality'.

There are a number of quality challenges faced by the sector and it relies heavily on its suppliers of goods, services and works to meet these challenges. It is important, therefore, that suppliers and potential suppliers understand these challenges and that this understanding is reflected in their bids.

Upon completion of the workbook you will be able to:

- Show how you will respond to the quality questions in either a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) or Invitation to Tender (ITT) document.
- Prepare an action plan to address any gaps/omissions and to ensure ongoing compliance.
- Draft a suitable quality management system for your business.

### 3. Why quality matters to small businesses

The quality offered by small businesses was thrown into the spotlight in 2005 by a recent Government-sponsored report entitled "Smaller Supplier Better Value?" Produced by the Office of Government Commerce and the Small Business Service. It concluded that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs\*) offer:

- Greater competition
- Lower cost base
- Greater innovation
- Increased responsiveness
- Greater contract flexibility
- Particular specialisms
- Improved quality of service

Quality of service can give the small business the edge over its larger rivals.

SMEs understand the importance of adding value without causing an exorbitant rise in costs. "Value for money" is a term embedded in small business owners' minds. Whilst all the benefits above are clearly relevant it is quality that is the key.

So what is quality and how do we define it?

We all have a definition of quality that is based on our expectations and experiences. People often say "I am prepared to pay that bit extra because I know that the item will last longer or provide additional satisfaction". For them, quality is about durability or satisfaction.

For many years Marks and Spencer had no need to advertise: the St Michael label was synonymous with quality. Its prices reflected a perceived "added value" or higher level of satisfaction when compared to other high street labels. In more recent times, Marks and Spencer has learnt that complacency leads to the competition stealing a march and that customer loyalty is hard won and even harder to maintain as increased choice tempts us all to try something new/different and then become loyal to that product or supplier!

\*This is a generic term and includes most Black and Minority Ethnic Businesses (BMEs)

\*This publication can be downloaded from:

[http://www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/CP0083\\_Small\\_supplier\\_better\\_value.pdf](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/CP0083_Small_supplier_better_value.pdf)

## **Activity 1**

**Spend a few moments to consider the following questions**

1. What does quality mean to you?
2. What does quality look like to you?
3. What is your definition of quality?

Remember there are no right or wrong answers.

### **A Simple definition**

**Quality is to do with fitness for purpose and meeting customer expectations.**

The challenge for small businesses is how to show quality during the tendering process. Once the contract is won, the business will have unlimited opportunities to make the quality of their provision apparent.

The initial stages of the tendering process are largely paper-driven. Having a written quality statement and supporting policies and procedures are therefore important. These do not need to be lengthy documents but they do need to be applied in the daily business environment. In other words, they need to be real.

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## 4. Quality in the public sector

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The tendering process can seem daunting to the newcomer.

Many questions are asked around quality in PQQs and ITT. Examples of these are given later, in section 8. These may seem daunting and perhaps not even particularly relevant to a small business.

Research has shown that by explaining the background to questions their relevance becomes clearer and also small businesses can respond appropriately. This is particularly true when discussing quality. This module is designed to help you do just that.

Quality is a key selection criterion in public sector tendering and it is therefore vital that all businesses have adequate systems and procedures in place to fulfil this requirement.

Businesses must have a written quality management system in place if they are to stand any chance of winning a public sector contract.

### **Activity 2**

#### **Does your business have a documented quality management system?**

If 'yes', read it now, and keep it with you as you work through this module, so that you can consider building and improving upon it.

If 'no', take this opportunity to prepare one. Most of the material that you need is probably already in your head!

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## 5. The quality agenda

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Over the last 20 years or so "quality" has become something of a buzzword. A huge industry has been created around it and it can seem daunting to the uninitiated! Let's try and get to the heart of it.

A variety of quality management standards have evolved. Following are details of the main UK and European standards.

Don't let the level of detail worry you. The information below provides a useful overview of the current key quality standards that can be referred to during the tendering process. Once you have read through it you may discover that you already have some of the elements in your working practices. Formalising them is then the next step!

### 5.1 ISO

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Standards are produced by a wide range of organisations including the British Standards Institute, Health & Safety Executive and the Food Standards Agency, to name but a few.

Probably one of the best known is the ISO set of standards. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is a network of national standards institutes from 148 countries working in partnership with international organisations, governments, industry, business and consumer representatives. ISO standards contribute to making the development, manufacturing and supply of products and services more efficient, safer and cleaner. They make trade between countries easier and fairer. They provide governments with a technical base for health, safety and environmental legislation. They aid in transferring technology to developing countries. ISO standards also serve to safeguard consumers, and users in general, of products and services - as well as to make their lives simpler.

**For businesses**, the widespread adoption of International Standards means that suppliers can base the development of their products and services on specifications that have wide acceptance in their sectors. This, in turn, means that businesses using International Standards are increasingly free to compete in many more markets around the world.

**For customers**, the worldwide compatibility of technology, which is achieved when products and services are based on International Standards, brings them an increasingly wide choice of goods and services as well as the benefit of healthy competition among suppliers.

**For governments**, International Standards provide the technological and scientific bases underpinning health, safety and environmental legislation.

**For consumers**, conformity of products and services to International Standards provides assurance about their quality, safety and reliability.

**For everyone**, International Standards can contribute to the quality of life in general by ensuring that the transport, machinery and tools we use are safe.

**For the planet we inhabit, International Standards on air, water and soil quality, and on emissions of gases and radiation, can contribute to efforts to preserve the environment.**

**For the public sector** the two most common ISO standards are 9000 and 14000.

**ISO 9000 is primarily concerned with "quality management", in other words what the organisation does to fulfil:**

The customer's quality requirements and applicable regulatory requirements whilst aiming to enhance customer satisfaction and achieve continual improvement of its performance in pursuit of these objectives.

**ISO 14000 focuses on "environmental management".**

It looks at what the organisation does to minimise harmful effects on the environment caused by its activities and to achieve continual improvement of its environmental performance.

These standards can apply to any organisation, large or small, regardless of its activities or sector. This makes both highly relevant to the public sector. Over the next few pages we are going to examine ISO 9000 in more depth.

**ISO 9000 is based on eight principles:**

- (i) Customer focus**
- (ii) Leadership**
- (iii) Involvement of people**
- (iv) Process approach**
- (v) System approach to management**
- (vi) Continual improvement**
- (vii) Factual approach to decision making**
- (viii) Mutually beneficial supplier relationship**

Taking each principle in turn we will spend some time examining what this means for you as you develop your business and position it to successfully compete for public sector contracts.

## 5.1.1 Principle (i): customer focus

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Organisations depend on their customers and therefore should understand current and future customer needs, meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations.

### Key benefits:

- ❑ Increased revenue and market share obtained through flexible and fast responses to market opportunities.
- ❑ Increased effectiveness in the use of the organisation's resources to enhance customer satisfaction.
- ❑ Improved customer loyalty leading to repeat business.

### Applying the principle of customer focus typically leads to:

- ❑ Researching and understanding customer needs and expectations.
- ❑ Ensuring that the objectives of the organisation are linked to customer needs and expectations.
- ❑ Communicating customer needs and expectations throughout the organisation.
- ❑ Measuring customer satisfaction and acting on the results.
- ❑ Systematically managing customer relationships.
- ❑ Ensuring a balanced approach between satisfying customers and other interested parties (such as owners, employees, suppliers, financiers, local communities and society as a whole).

### Implications:

The public sector has a vast range of customers (including you!) and as expectations have grown these have been translated into targets (often called Performance Indicators) by, amongst others the Audit Commission and other Government departments. Performance is measured against these targets and inevitably, these have been included in the specifications for contracts. Your ability to meet these targets is crucial to your chances of winning a bid.

### Definition

#### Performance Indicators

The Audit Commission has established a range of performance standards which are used to assess public sector performance. These range from how many times a phone can ring before it is answered to the number of homeless people in a borough.

Local authorities set their own targets, called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The obligation to achieve these is often passed down the supply chain to contractors and suppliers.

Increasingly contracts will ask questions around customer satisfaction: how you measure it, maintain it and deal with any complaints. Many small and newly established businesses will not have a written customer care policy. Most value their customers so highly that they will deal immediately with any perceived complaint without the rigmarole of paperwork.

### **Activity 3**

#### **Do you have a customer care policy?**

If not, please work through the following actions to develop and implement a policy.

Even if you do have a policy, it may be worth considering if there is any room for development.

#### **Actions for developing and implementing a customer care policy:**

##### **1. Draft a simple customer care policy to include:**

- Who your customers are
- Why they are important to you
- How you will interact with them
- The standards of service that they can expect
- How you will monitor the implementation and development of these standards
- How a customer can complain (both formally and informally)
- The customer service training (if appropriate) that your staff undergo.

##### **2. Make customers and potential customers aware of the policy**

- Include details in any marketing materials
- Display at least a summary in any area where your customers might visit
- Put the policy on your website (if you have one).

##### **3. Ensure staff are aware of and carry out the policy**

- Discuss it from time to time
- Provide training as appropriate
- Encourage discussions on how to improve customer service.

### **Activity 4**

## **Whether you have a customer care policy or not: how do you manage your customer relations?**

- How do you handle customer complaints?
- What training do you provide on customer service?
- Does your organisation hold any external customer service accreditations?

### **5.1.2 Principle (ii): leadership**

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Leaders establish unity of purpose and direction of the organisation. They should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organisation's objectives.

#### **Key benefits:**

- People will understand and be motivated towards the organisation's goals and objectives.
- Activities are evaluated, aligned and implemented in a unified way.
- Miscommunication between levels of an organisation will be minimised.

#### **Applying the principle of leadership typically leads to:**

- Considering the needs of all interested parties including customers, owners, employees, suppliers, financiers, local communities and society as a whole.
- Establishing a clear vision of the organisation's future.
- Setting challenging goals and targets.
- Creating and sustaining shared values, fairness and ethical role models at all levels of the organisation.
- Establishing trust and eliminating fear.
- Providing people with the required resources, training and freedom to act with responsibility and accountability.
- Inspiring, encouraging and recognising people's contributions.

### **5.1.3 Principle (iii): involvement of people**

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People at all levels are the essence of an organisation and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organisation's benefit.

#### **Key benefits:**

- ❑ Motivated, committed and involved people within the organisation.
- ❑ Innovation and creativity in furthering the organisation's objectives.
- ❑ People being accountable for their own performance.
- ❑ People eager to participate in and contribute to continual improvement.

**Applying the principle of involvement of people typically leads to:**

- ❑ People understanding the importance of their contribution and role in the organisation.
- ❑ People identifying constraints to their performance.
- ❑ People accepting ownership of problems and their responsibility for solving them.
- ❑ People evaluating their performance against their personal goals and objectives.
- ❑ People actively seeking opportunities to enhance their competence, knowledge and experience.
- ❑ People freely sharing knowledge and experience.
- ❑ People openly discussing problems and issues.

**Implications:**

These two principles are closely linked. It is important that the workforce share your vision and deliver their contribution in a way which adds value to your business and which meets the requirements of the specification. Many public sector organisations follow the principles of the Investors in People (IiP) standard which has clear links to the above principle. This is not to say that you must seek a similar external accreditation, however you may want to look at its components and identify its achievement as a future business goal.

**Definition**

**Investors in People (IiP)**

The national standard which sets out a level of good practice for training and development of people to achieve business goals.

**Activity 5**

**Consider how you can show sound leadership and motivation practices on paper.**

You may want to look at the IiP standard and use its framework when submitting your bid.

During a tendering process you will be asked a number of personnel-related questions including your recruitment arrangements and the qualifications held by your employees. You may also be asked about how you keep your employees up to date on best practice and any legal changes that may affect your business.

It is recommended that you review current records to ensure that you will be able to respond fully to these questions.

## **Activity 6**

### **Check through your staff records.**

Do you have recruitment processes, qualifications of your employees and details of the training and communication channels easily to hand?

If not, get them together so that you are ready to use them during a tendering process.

### **5.1.4 Principle (iv): process approach**

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A desired result is achieved more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed as a process.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Lower costs and shorter cycle times through effective use of resources.
- Improved, consistent and predictable results.
- Focused and prioritised improvement opportunities.

#### **Applying the principle of process approach typically leads to:**

- Systematically defining the activities necessary to obtain a desired result.
- Establishing clear responsibility and accountability for managing key activities.
- Analysing and measuring of the capability of key activities.
- Identifying the interfaces of key activities within and between the functions of the organisation.
- Focusing on the factors such as resources, methods, and materials that will improve key activities of the organisation.
- Evaluating risks, consequences and impacts of activities on customers, suppliers and other interested parties.

### **5.1.5 Principle (v): system approach to management**

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Identifying, understanding and managing interrelated processes as a system contributes to the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its objectives.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Integration and alignment of the processes that will best achieve the desired results.

- ❑ Ability to focus effort on the key processes.
- ❑ Providing confidence to interested parties as to the consistency, effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation.

**Applying the principle of system approach to management typically leads to:**

- ❑ Structuring a system to achieve the organisation's objectives in the most effective and efficient way.
- ❑ Understanding the interdependencies between the processes of the system.
- ❑ Structured approaches that harmonise and integrate processes.
- ❑ Providing a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities necessary for achieving common objectives and thereby reducing cross-functional barriers.
- ❑ Understanding organisational capabilities and establishing resource constraints prior to action.
- ❑ Targeting and defining how specific activities within a system should operate.
- ❑ Continually improving the system through measurement and evaluation.

**Implications:**

Value for money and the pursuit of excellence are two key public sector drivers. Having said that, they are equally applicable in all other sectors! Showing HOW you will manage and deliver the contract is critical. Each contract is unique; however the two principles above are the bedrock for the approach to be used.

**Activity 7**

**Think about the resources that you use. Could you improve your processes and systems to make better use of these resources?**

For example:

- ❑ If you use sub-contractors, how do you manage and control them?
- ❑ Are your staff fully trained, so that you are getting the best from them? You may be able to support training with externally awarded accreditations, such as Investors in People.

**Tip**

When you are bidding for work, consider the workload implications of winning the contract. Do you have the capacity to support winning the work? How would this sit with existing contractors?

The awarding organisation will be evaluating the capacity of your business to handle the contract, as part of the evaluation process.

## 5.1.6 Principle (vi): continual improvement

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Continual improvement of the organisation's overall performance should be a permanent objective of the organisation.

### Key benefits:

- Performance advantage through improved organisational capabilities.
- Alignment of improvement activities at all levels to an organisation's strategic intent.
- Flexibility to react quickly to opportunities.

### Applying the principle of continual improvement typically leads to:

- Employing a consistent organisation wide approach to continual improvement of the organisation's performance.
- Providing people with training in the methods and tools of continual improvement.
- Making continual improvement of products, processes and systems an objective for every individual in the organisation.
- Establishing goals to guide, and measures to track, continual improvement.
- Recognising and acknowledging improvements.

### Implications:

Winning a contract can turn out to be the easy part! Continual improvement is a key consideration for all businesses.

The public sector is particularly focussed on ensuring that it takes advantage of current best practice and encourages innovation.

Frequently, tenders will ask you to make suggestions on different ways of achieving the specification. This may provide you with an ideal opportunity to stand out from the crowd.

### Tip

Before completing the documentation of an Invitation to Tender (ITT) consider the following:

1. Thoroughly read the documentation and any supporting information from the organisation's website or other paper materials. You might get some further insight into the requirements.
2. Consider any innovative ways for delivering the contract. Often, it will be stated in the documentation that alternative ways of meeting the requirements will be considered. Seize the opportunity to innovate!

### **5.1.7 Principle (vii): factual approach to decision making**

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Effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Informed decisions.
- An increased ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of past decisions through reference to factual records.
- Increased ability to review, challenge and change opinions and decisions.

#### **Applying the principle of factual approach to decision making typically leads to:**

- Ensuring that data and information are sufficiently accurate and reliable.
- Making data accessible to those who need it.
- Analysing data and information using valid methods.
- Making decisions and taking action based on factual analysis, balanced with experience and intuition.

#### **Implications:**

This principle relates to all businesses regardless of sector. When making a bid it is imperative that you follow this principle: discovering after you have signed a contract that you have incorrectly priced the bid could prove extremely costly, as you will have to honour it! Bidder beware!

### **5.1.8 Principle viii: mutually beneficial supplier relationships**

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An organisation and its suppliers are interdependent and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Increased ability to create value for both parties.
- Flexibility and speed of joint responses to changing market or customer needs and expectations.
- Optimisation of costs and resources.

#### **Applying the principles of mutually beneficial supplier relationships typically leads to:**

- ❑ Establishing relationships that balance short-term gains with long-term considerations, such as:
  - ❑ Pooling of expertise and resources with partners.
  - ❑ Identifying and selecting key suppliers.
  - ❑ Clear and open communication.
  - ❑ Sharing information and future plans.
  - ❑ Establishing joint development and improvement activities.
  - ❑ Inspiring, encouraging and recognising improvements and achievements by suppliers.

### **Implications:**

This principle has clear links with (iv) and (v) above. The public sector is actively encouraging its larger suppliers to establish links with smaller local suppliers. A growing number of organisations are actively encouraging large suppliers to use smaller local suppliers to deliver contracts.

### **Recommended actions:**

1. Find out who your large competitors are. This is usually common knowledge but if not then ask the public sector organisation.
2. Approach them as a potential supplier (particularly useful if you offer a specialist service) or even as a future business partner for a particular contract.

## **5.2 Total Quality Management (TQM)**

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A popular tool for establishing quality across all business activities. At its core is the customer-supplier interface. This core must be surrounded by a commitment to quality, communication of the quality message and recognition of the need to change the culture of the organisation to create total quality. TQM is far wider in its application than just assuring product or service quality - it is a way of managing people and business processes to ensure complete customer satisfaction at every stage, internally and externally. TQM, combined with effective leadership, results in an organisation doing the right things right, first time.

## **5.3 Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)**

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This is a voluntary initiative designed to improve companies' environmental performance. Its aim is to recognise and reward those organisations that go beyond minimum legal compliance and continuously improve their environmental performance. It is strongly backed by Government and the environmental regulators.

## 5.4 British Standards Institute Group

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This is the U.K based organisation that is linked to the International Standardisation Institute (ISO). It is a voluntary body that receives Government funding and was founded in 1901. The group provides

- the development of private, national and international standards
- information on standards and international trade
- independent certification of management systems and products
- product testing services
- training and seminars
- commodity inspection services.

The display of a British Standard number (e.g.: BS 1234) on, for instance, a consumer product, shows that the manufacturer claims to have made the product in accordance with the British Standard.

Sometimes BS will be accompanied by the letters EN and/or ISO. These mean that the standard was developed as a European (EN) or International (ISO) standard and then adopted by the UK as a British Standard.

## 5.5 CE standards

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Many products come under European Directives, and to be placed on the market in the European Union, some must bear CE marking - it's a legal requirement. CE marking is the manufacturer's claim that the product meets the essential requirements of all relevant European directives.

CE marking requirements vary from directive to directive, and even within directives. Third party testing, systems assessment and technical file assessments can be mandatory, but sometimes the manufacturer's unverified claim is all that's asked for. But if a manufacturer claims their product complies and it doesn't, they may be prosecuted.

These letters are often found on toys, equipment and clothing to show that they have reached industry standards.

## 5.6 Charter Mark

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The Charter Mark scheme is owned and supported by the Government for the improvement of customer service within the public sector. It fits with the Government's agenda for public service reform by focusing on key criteria such as setting standards, consulting users, using resources effectively and delivering customer satisfaction. It also helps focus on the need to improve services and offer choice where organisations are the sole provider such as tax offices, courts and Jobcentres.

## **5.7 Performance indicators**

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The Audit Commission has established a range of performance standards, which are used to assess public sector performance. These range from how many times a phone can ring before it is answered to the number of homeless people in a borough.

## **5.8 Industry specific standards**

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Virtually an A to Z of industry standards that exist. Examples include the particular make of cabling for an electrician, catering standards e.g. silver service, or level of competency shown by achievement of an NVQ award for customer service.

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## 6. Use of quality standards by SMEs

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The importance of quality has hopefully come through your reading so far. Now it is important to give the small business perspective on this subject.

Quality is not about having the "right" accreditation to be invited to bid for work. For many small businesses the costs (in financial and effort terms) of gaining ISO, liP or any other accreditation may be prohibitive. This is doubly true in the first few years of operations. Resources need to be rightly targeted on raising profile and running contracts.

Meeting the stated requirements of the potential client is the key. The public sector recognises that small businesses may not need the formal systems embodied in a national or international quality assurance accreditation such as ISO or Charter Mark. Similarly, they may not have a documented quality management system. As a minimum they need to show how quality is proven.

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### 6.1 Internal measures of quality

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Qualified and experienced staff are a key component. During the tendering process, you will be asked to list the skills, experience and qualifications of your workforce. Copies of certificates may also be sought by the purchasing organisation.

Previous customers will also be approached to confirm their experiences (this links nicely back to the earlier point about your customer care policy and procedures!).

How you monitor and measure performance will also help to shed light on quality management. For example: how often do you review contract performance? How do you handle complaints?

Has your business been recommended for or won any industry-specific awards? Trade associations, publications and industry bodies frequently recognise good practice. Encourage your clients to nominate your business or nominate yourself!

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### 6.2 Developing and implementing a quality management system

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#### Activity 8

**Write up your definition of quality and how you measure it as part of your continuous business improvement programme.**

Such a statement will be unique to your business. Below are some questions to consider:

- What are the key elements to include?
- That is: what message are you trying to get across? What are the values of your business that you want to promote?

- ❑ What commitment are you making?
- ❑ There is no point preparing a grand statement that is unrealistic and is more than likely going to be quickly abandoned when the pressure is on!
- ❑ How will you sustain this commitment?
- ❑ Being realistic is important: you are a busy person constantly juggling priorities!
- ❑ Whose support/help will you need?
- ❑ You may need to look outside as well as inside your company. Getting employees to commit is critical for service delivery.
- ❑ What resources are available both within and outside of your business?

### **Activity 9**

**Having prepared your statement and thought about how you will deliver on it, consider how you will monitor and audit the quality management system.**

Within the context of your business plan, how will you monitor the system?

This can range from informal approaches through to formal monitoring and external accreditation.

The cost increases as you move towards accreditation. There may come a point when you feel that this cost is an investment and well worth making.

## **6.3 Example of a basic documented quality management system**

### **Quality management system for a minicab firm taking children to school**

#### **Basic processes**

1. All drivers and escorts undergo police checking before being allocated to any route.
2. All cars are inspected by controller on a weekly basis to ensure cleanliness, road-worthiness and comfort.
3. All cars are equipped with a mobile phone, minor first aid kit and spillage kit for children.
4. Regular orders are allocated to the same drivers to ensure continuity of service.
5. Variations or new orders are allocated to appropriate drivers, preferably with experience of driving children.

#### **Complaints**

1. Any verbal complaints, in the first instance, by the person who receives the complaint.

2. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this stage then details will be passed to the controller who will attempt to resolve it.
3. If the complaint still cannot be resolved by the controller then details are passed to the managing director who will be the final arbiter.
4. If a complaint is made in writing then the controller will reply in writing, within seven days of receiving the complaint.
5. Copies will be kept of all written complaints for at least three years.

### **Interruption of service**

1. If a driver is unable to carry out their route for any reason (e.g. sickness), they must notify the office as soon as possible, but by 7.00am at the latest.
2. On hearing that a driver cannot carry out their run, the controller will allocate a relief driver.
3. Two relief cars with drivers will always be on standby to meet unexpected emergencies.
4. Relief cars and drivers will be equipped and qualified to the same standards as normal drivers.

## 7. Quality evaluation in procurement processes

### 7.1 What public sector purchasers are seeking

The following is a checklist of some quality factors that purchasers are encouraged to look for when sifting through tender submissions. It is not an exhaustive list.

Purchasers are being encouraged to clearly state the quality factors that are crucial and must be demonstrated for each unique purchase.

Unless a purchaser specifically states that ISO or similar accreditation is required, bidders without such accreditation should not be excluded from the process. Instead, the bidder's documented quality management system will be evaluated against the required criteria.

#### Products

- Cost - economy, standard or luxury range, all in or extras, reductions for volume and loyalty.
- Strength, robustness and reliability - BSI standards, quality management system
- Size and weight - length, breadth, width.
- Compatibility with other products and systems fit for the purpose.
- Sellers' ability to consistently supply the same range of goods or equivalent in the future.
- Accuracy.
- Health and safety and other legal requirements.
- Environmental issues.
- Delivery.
- Back up, help desk, maintenance - ISO9000 provider.
- Fit for use - easy to operate, colour, childproof, DDA requirements.
- Product life, replacement costs, disposal.
- Guarantees and warranties.

#### Services

- ❑ Service charges - all-in? Reduction in cost as volume increases, sharing in improvement of cost efficiencies.
- ❑ Accuracy and reliability of service, quality management system.
- ❑ Promptness and timeliness of service.
- ❑ Providers' ability to consistently supply service at a consistent quality over period of contract.
- ❑ Accuracy, professional standards adopted, quality and training of staff.
- ❑ Compatible with other services.
- ❑ Creativity, flair and style with which service is delivered.
- ❑ Prompt and timely introduction or migration of service.
- ❑ Extent to which service providers understand and respond to what customers want and expect from the service.
- ❑ Morale and motivation of the staff providing the service.
- ❑ Professionalism of the staff and service.
- ❑ Helpfulness of the staff and service - face to face, telephone service.
- ❑ Effectiveness of complaints procedures and rectification of mistakes.
- ❑ Provision of an accessible and free helpline service.
- ❑ Health and safety and environmental issues

## 7.2 Quality questions during procurement processes

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### In Pre-Qualification Questionnaires

#### Example questions

- E1 Please provide details of any Quality Assurance systems operated by the Potential Provider, both internally and externally through the supply chain.

***QA Systems (300 words or fewer)***

- E2 Please describe the internal controls used by the Potential Provider to manage the delivery of this type of service to ensure that the requirements are met fully in terms of quality and timely delivery.

***Internal Controls (300 words or fewer)***

- E3 Please provide details of any quality assurance certification relevant to provision of the services as set out in paragraph 4 that the Potential Provider and any envisaged supply chain member (sub-contractor) or consortium member holds e.g. ISO 9001:2000 or equivalent standard. Please include a copy of relevant certificates.

***Details of quality assurance certification held (300 words or fewer)***

Either insert required details or state 'None'

E4 Please provide details of any quality assurance certification relevant to provision of the services as set out in paragraph 4 for which the Potential Provider and any envisaged supply chain member (sub-contractor) or consortium member has applied

***Details of quality assurance certification which has been applied for  
(300 words or fewer)***

Either insert required details or state 'None'

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## **8. Action Plan**

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### **8.1 Immediate**

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Having completed the workbook it is important that you identify any key actions that you need to implement as you prepare your business to compete in the public sector marketplace.

Identify up to three actions you need to implement as a result of completing this workbook. Don't forget to consider whose support you need and what resources are available to help you.

1. What action is required?  
How will you know it has been successfully implemented?
2. What action is required?  
How will you know it has been successfully implemented?
3. What action is required?  
How will you know it has been successfully implemented?

### **8.2. Within 12 months**

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It would be unrealistic to expect a small business to formalise all its quality management arrangements overnight. As the business evolves quality will be a key consideration and systems, policies and procedures will be established. It is important not to lose sight of quality as an issue: it certainly will remain centre stage within the public sector!

Identify up to three priorities that should be addressed over the next 12 months. Again identify whose support you need and what resources are available to support your efforts.

1. What needs to be done?  
How will you know it has been addressed?
2. What needs to be done?  
How will you know it has been addressed?
3. What needs to be done?  
How will you know it has been addressed?

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## 9. Conclusions

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Small businesses deliver quality goods and services. The absence of formal accreditations should not prevent successful tendering. What is required is sufficient evidence to show how your business defines quality and in turn how it monitors and assesses performance in terms of quality. Written procedures, no matter how simple, indicate that the subject has been considered and is taken seriously. Quality does not stand alone. It is linked to the environment and health and safety.

Remember: quality is about being fit for purpose and meeting customer expectations.

If you have completed all the activities in this workbook you will have begun to address the issue for your business. Good luck!

## 10. Further support

British Standards Institute (BSI)

[www.bsi-global.com](http://www.bsi-global.com)

International Standardisation Organisation (ISO)

[www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)

Investors in People

[www.iipuk.co.uk](http://www.iipuk.co.uk)

Health and Safety Executive

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>