

Looking Back to See Ahead

BY PATRICIA THOMASHEFSKY

Reviewing 2010 audit results can help you chart the right course in 2011.

AS BABY NEW YEAR utters his last hoorays and the rest of us recover from our New Year celebrations, it is time to either begin breaking resolutions or giving real thought to the start of 2011. At Quality Management Company (QMC), we typically like to start a new year by reviewing the last. It helps us understand our accomplishments, define areas that need attention, and continue to chart our long-term goals.

Does this sound familiar? It should. Those are the third and fourth steps of the “Plan, Do, Check, Act” cycle we frequently refer to in this column. If you need a little refresher, just take a look at the May 2010 Quality Corner entitled “What is a Quality Management System?” (available as a free download at www.modernsteel.com/backissues.)

We want to take a moment to summarize some key points that can be beneficial in comparing your own results to your plans, in the “check” stage, and help as you begin to “act” in the new year. This should assist both our certified participants and those who are thinking about becoming certified.

Start with the QMC Audit Report, which is a participant’s tangible result or product of the certification process and audit. It summarizes how well a facility’s quality management system (QMS) is meeting the requirements set forth in the AISC certification program and how the QMS is functioning overall. The report addresses three specific areas: Identified Strengths, Opportunities for Improvement and Areas of Concern.

This last area is where you should focus. The concerns listed there are non-conformances of your quality manage-

ment system that may not have warranted a formal QMC Corrective Action Request (CAR), such as instances that are not systemic or do not have trending conditions. By itemizing these items, QMC tries to help participants pinpoint areas where additional efforts should be focused. Just as each of us is different, all of our participants are at different levels of development, and this is where QMC is able to individually guide participants in continually improving the facility’s QMS. We require the participant to engage its own internal Corrective Action System to eliminate these situations which will improve their overall QMS. As a follow up, QMC will review these concerns and resulting actions taken during the following year’s scheduled audit. If the concern is repeated, it then will result in a QMC CAR.

As we start 2011, we thought it would be helpful to share again the top concerns we encountered last year (see chart). This is helpful information because the concerns of one year typically result in Corrective Action Requests (CARs) the following year.

It is interesting to note that for fabricators, three concerns accounting for 49% of the total concerns reported were in the following areas:

- Process Control – Fabrication processes including thermal and mechanical cutting, fitting and assembly, welding, drilling, bolting, milling, and coating accounted for 26% of the 2010 total. To break this down further, 47% of this total was related to welding, while bolting and painting tied at 18% each.
- Management Responsibility – Issues regarding accountability of the executive management to direct and lead the company’s quality management system were 13% of the 2010 total. Of that, neglecting quality goals led, at 42%; qualifications that were not documented or reviewed was at 25%; closely following was management review, at 23%.
- Purchasing – The act of ensuring that subcontractors and suppliers provide materials, products, and services conforming to project requirements represented 10% of the 2010 total. The top three areas were 51% for evaluation of suppliers, 33% for purchasing data, and 16% for certificates of conformance.



Patricia Thomashefsky is the director of Quality Management Company (QMC), the independent auditing company for AISC certification programs. She is responsible for calibrating the QMC audit processes and the work of the independent contract auditors. She also leads the continual improvement effort of QMC’s quality management system. She can be reached at patt@qmconline.com.

Quality Corner is a monthly feature that covers topics ranging from how to specify a certified company to how long it takes to become a certified company. If you are interested in browsing our electronic archive, please visit www.aisc.org/QualityCorner.

QMC's Top 10 Areas of Concerns
in 2010

Process	25.61%
Management	12.84%
Purchasing	9.25%
Calibration	8.39%
Detailing	5.95%
Corrective Action	5.95%
Inspection	5.88%
Training	5.67%
Internal Audit	4.81%
Document Control	3.52%

Now that you know the main concerns of 2010, what does it tell you about your own facility? You need to draw your own conclusions, of course, but remembering that history generally repeats itself, realize that you now have a heads up. We recommend you pull your previous audit report and see how your QMS compares. Are any of these topics noted? Now is the time to check and start defining an "act" plan for 2011.

Another resource QMC is planning for 2011 will be a three-hour short course on May 11 in Pittsburgh before the kickoff of the 2011 NASCC: The Steel Conference. The title of the course is "Harnessing the Value of AISC Certification." It will be led by QMC auditors who will share their insight and knowledge on such topics as those mentioned above. For additional information, see the NASCC Advance Program in this issue of MSC, visit www.aisc.org/nascc, or contact certification@qmconline.com. **MSC**

Seeking Success Anecdotes

AISC Certification is in the process of compiling a cost-benefit analysis of how AISC Certification has attributed to reducing a company's typical operating/processing costs. If you would like to confidentially share an individual example, story, or fact, please email certinfo@aisc.org. We would enjoy following up with you further.