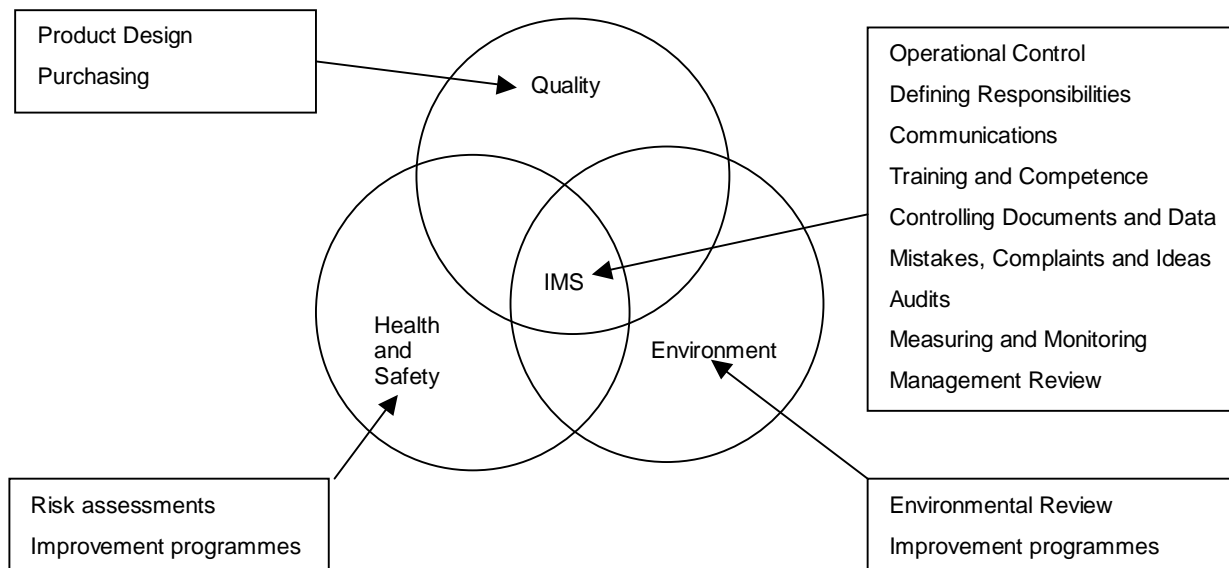


A to Z of Integrated Management Systems

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Organisations that wish to combine quality, environment, health and safety management functions should consider an Integrated Management System (IMS). Ollie Shaw offers some advice for the would-be integrationist.

An IMS has clear advantages over separate systems, as about 80% of the work is common to all three disciplines.



- A **Assessment:** – begin with the end in mind. This could be an external examination by an independent organisation who check that you have complied with each and every paragraph of the three standards. You need to be able to say, "This is how we have answered that paragraph." This process: 1) look and see, meet and greet – are you anywhere near ready? 2) formal visit – an overview with some selected probing, 3) formal visit – a detailed inspection.
- B **Benefits:** why bother with an IMS? It's simple really; you would achieve recognition, you would have a robust system with procedures and you will be well respected.
- C **Commitment:** – it won't work unless the boss is behind it.
- D **Document control:** – all singing from the same hymn sheet? This is very easy nowadays with computer networks. The IMS manager puts the current version on the server as read-only. Mark each document as "The current version is only available on screen, printed versions may be out of date". Everyone can now access them on screen. List all your business records, where they are, how long they are kept and how they are disposed.
- E **Environmental review:** – create a long list of environmental aspects of the business, its operations, its products, its services and unusual circumstances – such as start up, blow up, shut down and break down. Check each aspect for its impact on land, sea, air, noise, if it's

ugly or if it uses a lot of resources. Also check each aspect to see if it is legal and who is affected by it.

- F **Focus on customers:** - we all need them. They are expensive to find and even more expensive to lose, so take care of them. Ask them what they think of your business.
- G **Groundwork for a new design:** – have a plan for a new product. What is the design brief? What should be in the product specification? Are you sure, because you can change your mind? Does it work? Does the customer believe it works? If you make a change, evaluate it properly.
- H **Have an emergency plan prepared:** – practice with a dry run (or a wet run if it involves water). If the pipe bursts, what will you do? Learn from the experience and do better next time.
- I **Improvement programmes and identification:** - the Doctor prescribes a course of medicine to improve those nasty environmental aspects you have and those risky situations you get yourself into. Every production lot must have a unique identification (batch number or contract name).
- J **Justify your action:** – make sure you have a sensible response for each paragraph of the standards.
- K **Keep your audits up to date:** – these are your own internal checks that the business complies with the standard. Look for convergence between what actually happens (observation), what your procedures say should happen and what the standards require.
- L **Legislation:** – you must comply with the laws listed in your environmental review and safety risk assessments. If not, you won't pass your assessment and, by the way, you're breaking the law. For information try the IQA, IEMA and IOSH.
- M **Manual, monitoring, measurements and management review:** – assessors put great store in the manual document, so make it good. It is a framework document explaining how all the elements of an IMS fit together. Don't go into detail, that's what procedures and forms are for. Monitoring business processes with measurements is critical. List the measurements to be made, who takes them and how often. Analyse the results and report to. The management review asks "So, how have we done and what do we do next?" Decide on action points for the IMS, the product, and the resources needed. Make notes and keep them.
- N **Non-conformance, complaints, corrective action and preventive actions** all lead to **continuous improvement:** – non-conformance is the IMS code name for a cock up. Complaints are great, they tell us where we went wrong. Only our friends complain, as the silent majority will just walk away. Corrective action is the rectification you need to do to *mend a broken* situation - mopping up the spilt milk. You have four main choices: 1) do the job again, 2) ask the customer to accept a different specification, 3) sell the product as a second quality, and 4) throw your arms in the air and put it down as a good learning experience. Preventive action is the old suggestion scheme. If you dream in the bath, bed or bar, write it down. Ask the IMS manager to evaluate your idea. All of these concepts lead to improvements, so if you think it's perfect now, you're not thinking hard enough.
- O **Objectives:** – if you don't have a goal, any road will do. Try some traditional ones such as for quality: 1) on time delivery of products, 2) on specification manufacture of products, or 3) on price, (or cost) production of products. For environmental try: 1) reducing energy consumed per product, or 2) reducing pollution per product. And for Safety try: 1) reducing accidents per man-day and 2) reducing risk.

- P **Policies, planning, processes and purchasing:** – policies are nice and cuddly things we believe in and say in sales documents to make customers feel a warm glow. Poor planning produces poor performance. Identify the key stages each product will go through during production and the checks you will make along the way. There are only three processes in any business; prospecting, operating and administrating. You may be a one-man-band who hops between all three, or you may be a small cog in a large corporate wheel. Choose your suppliers carefully and make them aware of their impact on your business. Make your requirements clear before you commit to buying. Check goods and services on arrival.
- Q **Quality:** – defined as “meeting the specification”. We create the specification for our own business, so we have to live up to it.
- R **Risk assessments, responsibilities and records:** - risk assessments are the health and safety version of an environmental review. List all the hazards, who is affected, how often they are affected, how long they are affected, why they are affected, what laws apply and what controls are in place to minimise the hazard. What action should you take? Define responsibilities- who does what around here? Records are your proof of compliance with the standards. Sadly, if it's not written down it doesn't exist – so make sure there is a (an electronic) document.
- S **Speak to people, consultation and communication:** - let staff know that the New World starts from this point on. Communicate through the company website, intranet, notice board, memos and even talking to people. Let your staff, and other interested persons or groups, know what is going on. You'll have to decide if you're going to disclose your significant environmental aspects to all and sundry.
- T **Training:** – this is surprisingly easy. Have a matrix (spreadsheet) listing staff on one side and skills on the top. Colour-code each cell using traffic lights – blank means no training is planned, red means training is planned, amber means undergoing training and green means competent. Also, list the personal achievements for each member of staff.
- U **You must get others involved:** - an IMS does not work if it is done only by the quality manager, or environmental manager or the safety manager. Spread the tasks out amongst the staff. You'll be surprised at the reaction when people fell involved.
- V **Verbal orders:** - a lot of business is run on trust, so verbal orders are commonplace. Always confirm the customer's order by reading back to them what you think they want, just like they do in telephone banking.
- W **Workmanship criteria or operational control:** – make sure that there are clear instructions for each activity, especially where the absence of instructions could cause embarrassment.
- X **Don't get cross:** - change is difficult. A long journey is made up of many small steps. Help is at hand.
- Y **Why?** -see B for benefits
- Z **Zzzzz:** - sleep on it. It takes time to deliver, especially the engineering side of improvement programmes.

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