



ISO 9001:2026

Quality management principles – Your foundation for success



Quality management principles

– Your foundation for success

Consistently delivering quality is one of the strongest drivers of organizational success. Organizations that meet customer expectations, earn the trust of interested parties and continually improve the way they operate are better equipped to adapt to change, strengthen performance and create lasting value.

The ISO 9000 family of standards provides internationally recognized guidance and requirements to help organizations achieve these outcomes. At its core are seven **quality management principles (QMP)**, a set of fundamental management concepts that underpin effective quality management and form the foundation of ISO 9001.

Whilst ISO 9001 specifies the requirements for a certifiable quality management system, ISO 9000 explains the QMPs, introduces the fundamental concepts of quality management and defines the terminology used throughout the ISO 9000 family. Together, they help organizations build a deeper understanding of quality management and realize the full benefits of their quality management system.

This brochure provides an overview of the seven QMPs, explaining how they support better decision-making, stronger organizational performance, and the consistent delivery of value for customers and other interested parties.

What are quality management principles?

The quality management principles are the fundamental concepts that underpin effective quality management, providing the foundation on which a quality management system (QMS) and its requirements are built. While organizations implement the requirements of a QMS, it is the principles that give those requirements direction and purpose.

The principles are closely connected and are most effective when applied together. Rather than operating in isolation, they reinforce one another to help organizations make better decisions, strengthen performance and achieve sustained success. No one principle is more important than any other: they are all interrelated and interdependent.

For that reason, the QMPs should not be viewed as a one-time exercise. Organizations are encouraged to revisit them regularly, to ensure their approach remains aligned with these fundamental concepts.

The seven QMPs are:

- 1. Customer focus**
- 2. Leadership**
- 3. Engagement of people**
- 4. Process approach**
- 5. Improvement**
- 6. Evidence-based decision-making**
- 7. Relationship management**

Keeping the principles relevant

Organizations today operate in an increasingly complex and fast-paced environment. Customer expectations continue to evolve, technologies are transforming the way organizations work, regulations are changing and global challenges – from climate-related issues to supply chain disruption – are reshaping the business landscape. At the same time, organizations are expected to demonstrate not only quality and reliability, but also transparency, resilience and ethical behaviour.

In this environment, the QMPs provide a stable foundation for effective decision-making and performance. Organizations should revisit them often to ensure they continue to reflect their current context, address the needs and expectations of interested parties and support a balanced approach to quality management. This helps create the culture, processes and behaviours needed to consistently deliver value and adapt with confidence.





QMP 1

Customer focus

Organizations succeed when they consistently meet their customers' needs. Customer focus is about more than delivering products and services that meet requirements. It means understanding what customers and other interested parties value, anticipating how their expectations are changing, and using those insights to shape decisions across their operations. By doing so, organizations build trust, strengthen relationships and create the conditions for sustained success.

Every interaction with customers is an opportunity to build confidence and gain trust. Organizations that respond proactively, operate ethically and sustainably, and provide secure, seamless digital experiences are better positioned to earn customer loyalty, strengthen their reputation and remain competitive. Listening to customers and adapting to their changing needs enables organizations to continue creating value over time.





QMP 2

Leadership

Leadership sets the direction for effective quality management.

By establishing a clear purpose, aligning people around shared objectives and demonstrating commitment through their actions, leaders create the conditions for organizations to consistently deliver quality and achieve lasting success.

Leaders who demonstrate commitment, accountability and consistency help build a culture where quality is embedded in all aspects of the organization, ethical behaviour is encouraged and people are empowered to contribute.

When people understand how their work supports the organization's objectives and feel valued for their contribution, they are more engaged, more committed to continual improvement, and better equipped to respond to change.



QMP 3

Engagement of people

People are at the heart of every successful organization. Achieving sustained success depends on ensuring that everyone who works on the organization's behalf, regardless of their role or level, is engaged, empowered and able to contribute.

Engaged people understand how their work supports quality, customer satisfaction and organizational objectives. When individuals have the competence, resources and confidence to take ownership of their work, they are more likely to identify problems, share knowledge and support continual improvement.

By investing in the skills and engagement of its people, an organization strengthens its quality culture and creates an environment where motivation, collaboration and innovation can flourish.



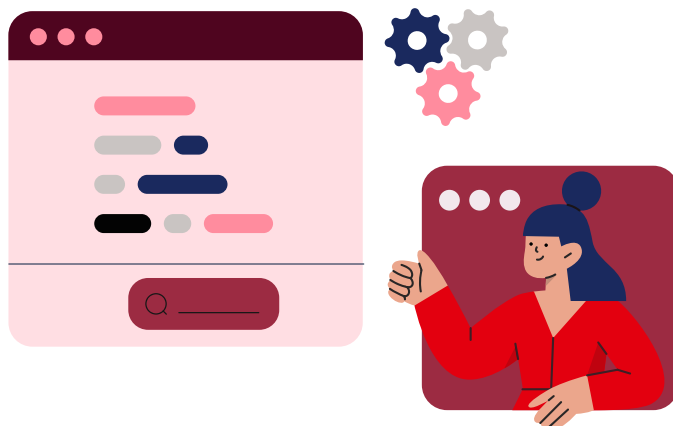
QMP 4

Process approach

Organizations achieve more consistent results when they manage their activities as interconnected processes rather than as isolated tasks. Every process contributes to a wider system, where decisions and performance in one area influence outcomes in another. Together, these processes form a quality management system that supports the organization's overarching management system.

A process approach helps the organization understand and manage these interactions, from inputs and outputs to responsibilities, controls and performance indicators. By managing processes as a connected system, they can optimize performance, strengthen resilience and respond more effectively to risks.

Organizations should also consider how quality management processes interact with other management disciplines, such as safety, cybersecurity and environmental management, while also depending on suppliers, partners and other externally provided processes. Taking this broader view of the value chain helps organizations realize the full benefits of the process approach.





QMP 5

Improvement

Successful organizations recognize that improvement is an ongoing journey rather than a one-time achievement. By continually seeking better ways of working, they strengthen performance, adapt to change and create lasting value.

Improvement can be incremental, breakthrough, corrective, preventive or innovative. It can apply to products and services, processes, customer experience, organizational culture, business performance, and the quality management system as a whole.

Creating a culture of improvement means encouraging people to question how things are done, identify opportunities and contribute new ideas. Customer feedback, performance data, audits and changes in the organization's context provide valuable insights that help organizations decide where improvement will have the greatest impact.





QMP 6

Evidence-based decision-making

Every decision shapes an organization's future. Whether responding to immediate challenges or planning for the long term, organizations achieve better outcomes when decisions are informed by reliable evidence rather than assumptions alone.

Evidence can come from many sources, including customer feedback, peer organizations, monitoring and measurement data, and audits. Combining these insights with professional judgement enables organizations to make more objective decisions, better understand uncertainty and respond with greater confidence.

Organizations that follow a structured decision-making process are better equipped to evaluate the quality of available evidence, recognize bias and limitations, and build a reliable foundation for decision-making.

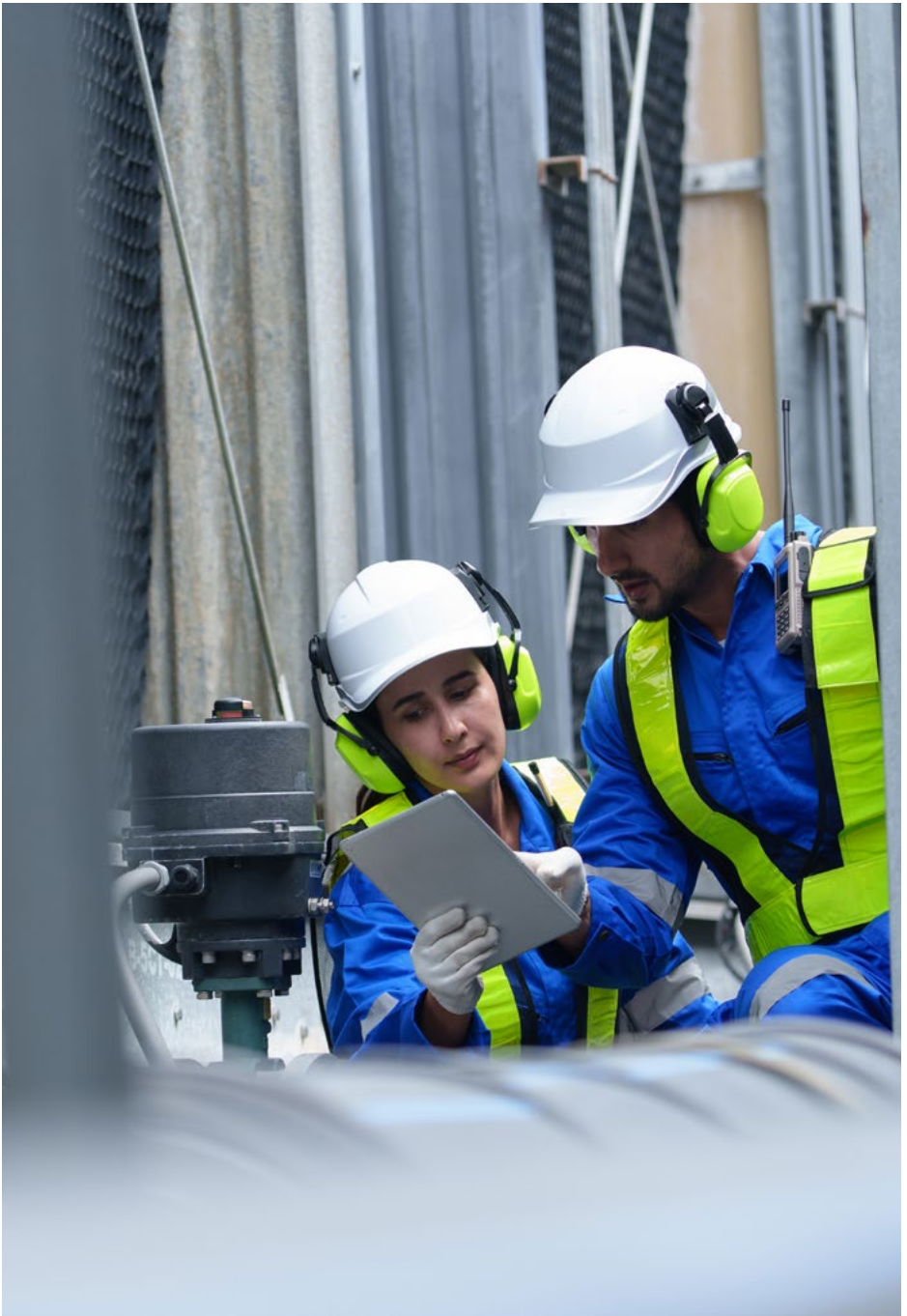


QMP 7

Relationship management

Long-term success depends on building strong relationships with the people and organizations that influence the ability to achieve objectives. While customers remain central, organizations also need to engage proactively with a wide range of interested parties, including suppliers, partners, regulators, investors and local communities.

Building relationships based on trust, collaboration and mutual benefit strengthens resilience, improves performance and enables organizations to respond more effectively to evolving customer, regulatory, ethical, climate-related and societal expectations.



Taking quality further

The seven QMPs provide the foundation for effective quality management and underpin ISO's quality management standards. While every organization will apply them differently, their value lies in helping organizations make better decisions, improve performance and achieve sustained success.

There is no single approach to applying these principles. How they are put into practice will depend on the organization's context, objectives, interested parties, and the risks and opportunities it faces. The key is to embed them in a way that reflects how the organization is led, managed and operated.

ISO 9000 provides additional guidance on the QMPs and the fundamentals of quality management, while ISO 9001 translates these principles into requirements for establishing an effective quality management system. Further information on these and related quality management standards is available from **ISO** and its **national member bodies**.



Related standards

Depending on your organization's objectives and needs, a number of related International Standards can help strengthen specific aspects of your quality management system.

Standard	Description
ISO 9000	Fundamentals and vocabulary
ISO 9004	Guidance to achieve sustained success
ISO 10001	Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for codes of conduct for organizations
ISO 10002	Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations
ISO 10003	Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for dispute resolution
ISO 10004	Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for monitoring and measuring
ISO 14001	Environmental management systems
ISO 19011	Guidelines for auditing management systems
ISO 22301	Business continuity management systems
ISO 31000	Risk management
ISO 37301	Compliance management systems
ISO 56002	Innovation management systems
ISO 45001	Occupational health and safety management systems

About ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 176* national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

ISO has published more than 26 400* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

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