



Creating an Infrastructure of Quality and Safety



Q ASSOCIATES

When a growing IT solutions business noticed that more pre-requisite accreditations were required to approach and win business from larger organisations, it coincided with an internal desire to clarify processes and procedures for more efficient working. Stepping Stones for Business enabled the company to achieve ISO accreditations and this led to a request to apply the same approach to other areas of the business.

Customer Background

Q Associates is one of the UK's leading IT Infrastructure Solutions businesses, which provides the supply, support, maintenance and configuration of computer hardware and software. With a wide variety of clients, from independent commercial businesses to large public sector organisations, Q Associates works in partnership with their customers to manage their IT infrastructure.

This starts with the installation of kit into data centres, by Q Associates' highly skilled specialist engineers. Providing them with backup capability and the maintenance of their equipment via Service Level Agreements, Q Associates provides 24x7 monitoring and system alerts against any issues which are pro-actively addressed, often before the client is even aware of them.

The Issue

In 2002, June, the Operations Director for Q Associates was due to retire and she wanted to ensure that the company had support on quality and safety management systems during the transition and beyond.

Quality standards were changing and both June and Jane, the Business Systems Manager agreed that it was a good time for a 'fresh pair of eyes' to take a look at their processes and procedures.

In addition, the business was planning to continue its growth and noticed that the 'pre-requisite' requirements for some of the larger and public sector organisations were becoming more stringent and regularly requested. With the intention of being a

World-class business, it was clear that these would be needed on several levels for the business to demonstrate its efficiencies and professionalism.

Q Associates could potentially be losing out on business by not having these standards and accreditations in place, so it was agreed to make an immediate start.

Stepping Stones' Solution

Rebecca already knew June, who invited Rebecca to assess their current systems. Following an initial gap analysis against the new ISO9001 standard, the whole system was mapped to identify key processes. It clarified where Q Associates currently were and what needed to happen to ensure they met the requirements for ISO9001. Each process was broken down into interrelated procedures and simple flowcharts produced to map Q Associates' working methods.

By 1997 Q Associates had successfully achieved ISO9000 but with the transition, in 2002, to the ISO9001: 2002 standard looming and increasing emphasis on health and safety compliance, the need for a consultant with the knowledge and experience of implementing an integrated business management system became essential.

Once ISO9001 had been achieved, formal Health and Safety procedures were implemented to support the existing policy together with Environmental and Corporate & Social Responsibility policies and procedures.

“Our customers range from small fast-moving organisations, through to large worldwide corporates, each with an individual set of needs and objectives. It is essential that we can demonstrate to our clients our ability to manage projects to high standards of quality and safety through our integrated Business Management System.

We chose Rebecca because of her level of experience and track record in implementing integrated systems into a variety of organisations and felt confident that her flexible approach would meet the needs of Q Associates. We now have a relationship where Rebecca is very much part of the team.”

Jane Sampson, Business Systems Manager
www.qassociates.co.uk/

Rebecca was appointed in August 2002 and in the November ISO9001:2002 was achieved, with flying colours. Rebecca went on to support Q Associates through the ISO9001:2008 transition, and Q Associates regularly receive excellent feedback from the registration body at their annual assessments.

As the health and safety, environmental and CSR systems have been developed, the ISO9001 procedures have been extended, and in liaison with an HR consultant, the policies and procedures form an integral part of the whole business management system.

Ongoing requirements from clients ensure that all aspects of the integrated management systems compliance are demonstrable and proactive. Scheduled audits and risk assessments are carried out and the business management system is continuously updated to ensure it reflects current practice and on-going changes in legislation.

About Stepping Stones for Business

Stepping Stones for Business (SSFB), led by principal consultant Rebecca Russell, is no ordinary quality and safety consultancy. With our head office based in rural Oxfordshire, we are a growing company with handpicked franchisees and associates setting up throughout the UK. SSFB offers a reassuring and comprehensive consultancy and support service to companies regionally. Our consultants are local. We get to know our clients, understand their culture and provide a personal, tailored service, supported by the comprehensive range of services that you would expect from a national company. That’s what sets us apart and makes us different from the rest.

