

CHANGE MANAGEMENT: A TRANSITION PERSPECTIVE FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES

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“The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress – George Kettering”

Implementing the change.....

Most of the ISO/IEC 17000 series of standards have been subject to systematic review and revision, and incorporate relatively few new requirements for third-party audit and certification of management systems. More often than not, transition to these newer standards may require translations, changes to processes, contracts, committees and other arrangements such as mechanisms for safeguarding impartiality. This period of transition usually requires significant efforts on the part of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) and those affected by the change, and specific measures need to be foreseen to ensure that the desired change objectives are achieved. While some CABs surf through it with no major challenges – and sometimes even with equanimity and enthusiasm – others, on the other hand, suffer to varying degrees, and even more so when there is no, or only passive, management of change approaches in place.

This period may be characterized by *hesitation, ambiguity, turbulence, tensions, conflict, paradox, disorder, discontent and inefficiency* – this is acceptable as long as there are mechanisms to ensure that the transition process is managed and monitored. Generally, when facing unsuccessful outcomes, CABs become impatient and blame the change and its promoters (including SANAS

Assessors) rather than assigning the cause to the desired transition objectives. This phenomenon is all the more acute when CABs cast doubts on the value or relevance of the stated objectives of standards in transition, and this has unfortunately proved inadequate for managing the desired change, and often detrimental to integrating transition objectives into the existing management system. On the basis of field experience and assessments, CABs are encouraged to follow a robust transition plan, with clearly defined and timed targets that can be a subject of a continuous monitoring plan.

As we celebrate successful transition to ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015, effective from the 16th June 2017, reference to change has disappeared altogether and has been replaced by the concept of “our new operating mode”. Nevertheless, there may remain a number of gremlins, gaps and incongruities trailing at CAB’s management’s heels. CABs are encouraged to continue with this transition mode as adjustments are made to incorporate requirements in their management systems from the new ISO/IEC TS 17021-2:2016 (published on 1st December 2016) and also ISO/IEC TS 17021-3:2017 (published on 14th March 2017). Both these technical specifications have a 2-year transition period from the date of publication.

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