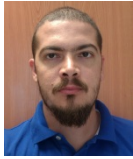


ISO 14001: Improving your business image and viability



*** by Marios Mavroyiannos**

Environmental management may have begun as a market trend but today is considered more than a necessity. Finite global resources constantly depleting, scarcity of valuable resources leading to conflicts, global warming resulting to climatic changes, environmental refugees and a vast other effects caused by non-sustainable use of resources by man-generated activities, have endangered our future on the “big blue”.

ISO, recognizing the need for a global management of the environmental impacts of every man-generated activity, answered by issuing the International Standard, ISO 14001 “Environmental Management Systems”. This International Standard specifies requirements for an environmental management system to enable an organization to develop and implement a policy and objectives which take into account legal requirements and information about significant environmental aspects. The overall aim of the standard is to support environmental protection and prevention of pollution in balance with socio-economic needs.

The philosophy is simple and fully integrated with other management systems; identify the environmental aspects of your activities and assess their importance; identify legal requirements; set objectives, responsibilities and allocate necessary resources; monitor and evaluate objectives and compliance.

The question is whether the implementation of the standard has been actually helpful for businesses and industry, and the environment itself. The answer is definitely a “yes”! After almost two decades of implementing ISO 14001, industries admit that they have achieved:

- Legislative awareness and compliance
- Reduced cost of waste management
- Savings in consumption of energy and materials
- Lower distribution costs
- Improved corporate image among regulators, customers and the public
- Growth of access to business partners and potential customers
- Protection of the company, assets and shareholders
- Environmental culture among employees and society as a whole

Furthermore, these achievements allow industries to keep business running in times of financial crisis, while others perish. The effective use of resources reduces operational costs, allowing maximization of

profits during prosperous economic periods. These can only prove that “investing” in environment has also positive economic effects, although the higher aim is the protection of the environment.

In addition to direct financial and environmental benefits, according to Harvard Business Review, moving towards a “greener” economy, new job opportunities and industries are created. Environmental management can serve as a catalyst for innovation, creation of new markets and wealth. In 2014, almost \$214bn were invested globally in renewable energy creating only in the US 80 000 new jobs in the same year.

The arrogant abuse of the planet’s limited resources is at least self-destructive. The limits have been set by nature and it’s time for mankind to adapt, in order to survive. Standards like ISO 14001 can assist in harmonizing practices to achieve global management of resources and ensure our future.

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