International Standards Supporting Businesses

Occupational health and safety management systems (ISO 45001)

UKaid
from the British people

Commonwealth Standards Network

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Challenges	Solutions
Over 90% of businesses globally are Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), they represent the majority of global employment and are an essential contributor to economic development in low and middle-income countries. However, some SMEs are not working at optimal levels of productivity, efficiency, safety, innovation, and compatibility and are therefore not gaining access to new markets and are not achieving their potential for growth and development.	International standards are primarily designed to address market needs, they are written for the benefit of users and their stakeholders and are applicable regardless of business size and location. They play an important role for SMEs by promoting productivity, efficiency, safety, supporting innovation, reducing costs, removing barriers to trade, and driving economic growth and development.
Worldwide, it is estimated that there are 7500 deaths every day due to unhealthy and unsafe working conditions. This figure exceeds the number of deaths due to war, road accidents and violence combined. Additionally, 374 million workers suffer from work-related non-fatal illness and accidents annually[1]. SMEs do not always realise that occupational health and safety (OH&S) is a crucial issue for them to address. Insufficient OH&S systems can lead to devastating impacts on the victims of accidents and occupational illness and lead to negative impacts on SMEs with small workforces as they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of workforce downtime and loss of key skills..	SMEs can reduce the risks of occupational accidents and illnesses. An effective OH&S management system helps SMEs protect people and business. ISO 45001 is the world's most widely used OH&S management system standard. It is designed to help organizations prevent work-related injury and ill-health and to provide safe and healthy workplaces. As an international standard, ISO 45001 is applicable globally, to organizations of all sizes across all sectors; it is an excellent framework to help SMEs tackle occupational health and safety.
International standards are sometimes regarded by SMEs as a burden because there is a poor understudying of the likely costs and effort as well as the benefits that can be achieved.	The Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN) works in partnership with National Standards Bodies throughout the Commonwealth to communicate the benefits that can be achieved by SMEs through the use of international standards.

[1] https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/safety-andhealth

Standards are agreed ways of doing things

Standards

There are a huge range of subjects and activities covered by standards, such as: making a product, managing a process, delivering a service, or supplying materials. Standards are designed to make life simpler.

Like a good cookbook, standards are written by experts to help us complete processes in effective, tried and tested ways to achieve efficient, high-quality, repeatable outcomes that consistently meet expectations.

International standards

While standards are sometimes only applicable to specific countries and stakeholders, international standards (e.g. ISO and IEC) are designed to be globally applicable and widely available.

Key features of international standards:

- International standards are written as voluntary documents to assist users meet global market needs.
- They provide a vital tool for reducing barriers to trade by assisting businesses speak a common technical language, enhancing trust in supply chains and giving consumers and businesses confidence that goods and services meet their expectations.
- Although they are written as voluntary documents, they can be used to demonstrate compliance with mandatory regulations and therefore relieve regulatory burdens.
- They provide globally recognised legitimacy through being collaboratively developed by experts via an open and transparent process of global public consultation and consensus building.
- They can be supported through Quality Infrastructure*.

Trading relationships are built on trust.

International standards have become the international language of trade by providing confidence in products and processes to regulators, business partners and consumers locally and globally. They ensure everyone gets what they expect.

*Quality infrastructure

For standards to carry additional authority, they need to be correctly used in ways that give everyone involved a high level of confidence in the outcome. It is to enable that consistent rigour that the concept of National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) has emerged.

National Quality Infrastructures form a foundation for economic development and greater prosperity.

Standardization

Agreed, repeatable ways of doing something. Can be used as a voluntary tool to demonstrate compliance with mandatory regulations.

Conformity Assessment

Testing, verification, and certification processes for formal recognition that show the requirements of standards are being met.

Accreditation

Formal recognition that organizations can perform conformity assessment.

Metrology

Science of accurate measurement.

Market Surveillance

Checking and ensuring compliance of regulations.

International standards support SMEs

SMEs represent more than 90% of businesses and the majority of employment globally. They play an essential role in low and middle-income countries where they account for approximately 70% of jobs[2] and contribute up to 40% of national income[1].

Businesses are more successful with effective processes in place, regardless of size, location, or sector. International standards provide globally recognised best practice for effective processes, this brings benefits to SMEs, including:

- Enhance confidence by demonstrating to business partners, regulators, staff, and customers that your products and services consistently and measurably meet expectations.
- Access to markets is improved locally, regionally, and internationally when stakeholders all use the same international standard.
- Resilience is improved by using processes to identify, analyse, and evaluate risks.
- Profitability and competitiveness are increased through efficiency and productivity improvements.

International standards provide business development opportunities to SMEs and help them reduce risks.

[2] https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance

Occupational health and safety (OH&S) management systems

- Each year, an estimated 2.78 million workers die from occupational accidents and work-related diseases and 374 million workers suffer from non-fatal occupational accidents[3].
- The ILO has found that industrialised countries have seen a steady decrease in occupational accidents and diseases, but the trend is not taking place for less developing countries[4] - this is partly due to ineffective OH&S systems.
- Increasing the effective use of OH&S management systems by SMEs in developing countries reduces the number of workplace accidents, illness, and deaths. This also reduces business risks for SMEs and the damaging wider impacts to society.

Implementing an OH&S management system helps SMEs protect people from injuries, illness and prevent loss of life.

ISO 45001 'Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use'

- ISO 45001 is one of the most widely used standards for OH&S management systems and is relevant for organizations of any size.
- The standard provides a framework to help organizations improve their OH&S management. It provides flexibility by highlighting processes that need to be considered and what is needed of these processes – but leaves it to the organization to design processes that suit its circumstances.

ISO 45001 is just as relevant for SMEs that only operate locally as it is for large multinational companies. It is applicable to public and private sector businesses and to not-for-profit organizations across all sectors.

[3] https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/safety-andhealth
[4] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_094524.pdf

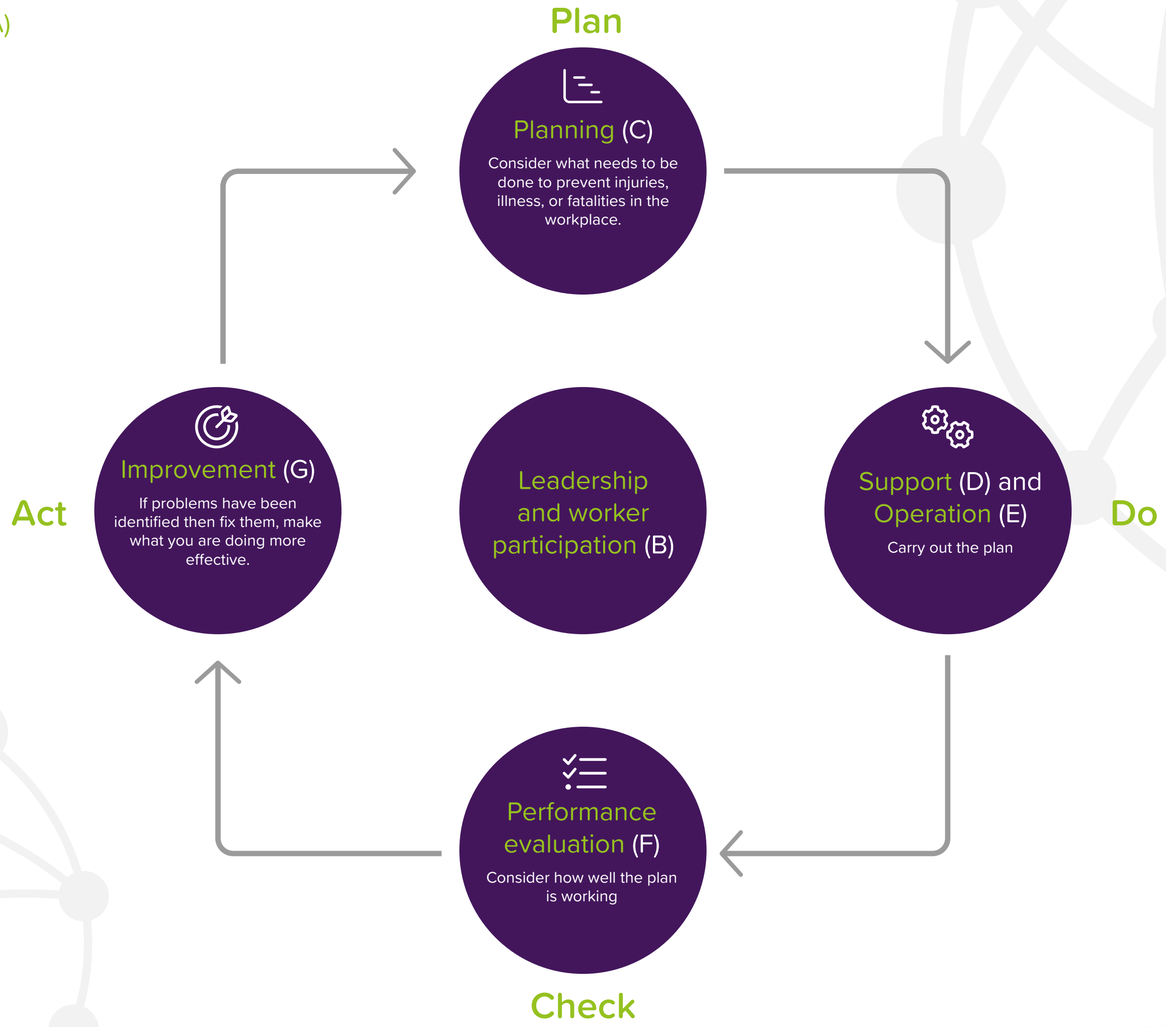
Benefits for SMEs implementing ISO 45001 OH&S management system:

- Process improvements: A systematic approach to enhancing protection for anyone who could be harmed by the SMEs activities.
- Increased organizational reliance and sustainability.
- Demonstrate conformity: Improved assurance, compliance and confidence.
- Reputational improvements: Demonstrating commitments to a safe and healthy workplace.
- Compatibility: Adopting the global occupational health and safety management system standard creates confidence and opens new markets.
- Alignment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 'Good health and well-being' and SDG 8 'Decent work and economic growth'.
- Effective OH&S management can lead to increased morale in the workforce and positively impact the quality of staff that can be recruited and retained. It sends a strong message that the organization cares for its people – this has a positive impact on a organization's reputation with staff, customers, business partners and government.
- ISO 45001 emphasises proportionality whereby the cost and effort that goes into the OH&S management system should be proportionate to the size of the organization and the nature of its activities.

SMEs should always get more benefit from using ISO 45001 than the cost/effort they put in.

- As with other ISO management system standards, ISO 45001 uses a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle that supports the process approach and risk-based thinking.
- Hazards are identified, risks assessed, and control and mitigation measures are applied as necessary, with processes established to monitor performance and help ensure the desired results are achieved.
- The Plan-Do-Check-Act approach supports continual improvement by helping SMEs consider whether their processes are properly managed and resourced, are achieving their objectives, and to ensure that lessons learned are applied to future activities.
- Risk-based thinking allows SMEs to regularly assess where their OH&S processes may be at risk – and how to prevent or minimise the effects of those risks.
- ISO 45001 helps SMEs to understand the context of their business (i.e. what does the business do, in what locations, who is at risk of suffering from workplace injuries or illness), and to tailor its OH&S management system to mitigate the risks particular to its activities, to achieve improved outcomes.

Context of the organization (A)



Selected highlights of ISO 45001

- **A** Context of the organization
  - Understand possible positive or negative influences on your organization's OH&S performance.
  - Influences can come from anything that has potential to impact on, or is impacted by your organization. It is important to identify what these influences are and what their needs and expectations are e.g. hazards specific to your organization and laws specific to locations.
  - Fully understand your organization and the needs and expectations from stakeholders such as workers and regulators.
  - Implementation approach: Consider workers and other stakeholders such as contractors, insurers, customers.
  - Determine the scope of the OH&S management system to fit the needs of your organization.
- **B** Leadership and worker participation:
  - Establish leadership commitment to ensuring that the OH&S management system is effective and relevant to day-to-day operations of the organization.
  - Engage workers actively in the development and operation of the management system; consult them and involve them in decision-making.
  - Ensure policies, processes and suitable resources are available with clear roles and responsibilities determined, and that the requirements of the system including continual improvement are effectively monitored and communicated.
- **C** Planning:
  - Activities must be planned with consideration of the identified risks and opportunities that are relevant to the desired OH&S outcomes.
  - Identify hazards, risks, opportunities, legal and other requirements.
  - Set objectives for OH&S performance and the performance of the OH&S management system.
- **D** Support:
  - Ensure necessary resources are committed to the OH&S management system.
  - Consider competence, awareness, communication, documentation.
- **E** Operation:
  - Operational planning, implementing and controlling processes needed to meet the requirements of the OH&S management system.
  - Consider management of change, procurement, emergency
- **F** Performance evaluation:
  - Determine the performance and effectiveness of the OH&S management system through monitoring, measurement and analysis.
  - Examine: Consider evaluation of compliance, internal audit, management review.
- **G** Improvement:
  - Identification and implementation of opportunities for improvement.
  - Examine: Nonconformity – where requirements are not met, incidents, continual improvement.

Evidence that you conform with the standard:

- ISO 45001 is written as a tool to support businesses and their stakeholders. Its use is voluntary, though on occasion organizations may require their suppliers to adopt it and demonstrate conformity to it. This can be via self-declaration of conformity, or via external conformity assessment, either by an individual client, or by an independent conformity assessment (or "certification") body. Independent assessment provides stakeholders with enhanced confidence and can lead to:
  - Improved risk management and further identification of improvements.
  - Improved compliance with requirements set out by customers and regulators.
  - Enhanced trust.
  - Improved opportunities within global markets.
  - Stronger collaboration with other certified organizations.
- SMEs should check that the organization carrying out the Conformity Assessment is accredited by a reputable organization , this will help ensure the quality of assessment and reduce the the risk of the assessment not being recognised by stakeholders.

Your ISO 45001 Journey

1. **Prepare:** Contact your NSB, government departments, professional associations, ISO, or the CSN for more information on ISO 45001.
2. **Understand** Read the standard and build an understanding of how ISO 45001 sits within your existing activities, processes and objectives. Establish if any additional resources may be needed to implement requirements in your organization.
3. **Implement:**
   a. Engage Top Management
   b. Identify how your business meets the requirements already and whether there are any areas that must be strengthened to implement an effective OH&S management system.
   c. Train personnel (gap assessments and training programmes can usually be carried out by your NSB).
4. **Review** performance via the ISO 45001 Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle.
5. **If required,** gain certification via an accredited organization.

Get involved:

- For international standards to be globally applicable and widely used it is important that the views of a diverse set of stakeholders (e.g. SMEs, consumers, academics) are represented in their drafting and revision processes.
- ISO 45001 is developed and maintained by an ISO Committee with working groups consisting of experts from across the globe that are nominated by their National Standards Bodies.
- Stakeholders that are interested in contributing to the development of international standards should contact their NSB, they generally manage National committees that 'mirror' the international committee to provide comments/ and formulate voting positions on the development of international standards.

About the Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN)

The CSN is a collaborative network that supports trade, economic growth and prosperity throughout the Commonwealth by promoting increased awareness, development and use of international standards.

To find out more about the network please see **www.commonwealthstandards.net** or contact the CSN Senior Programme Manager, Ben Hedley **ben.hedley@bsigroup.com**

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