

Prior Scientific Instruments

Benefits

- **Cemented a relationship with major US company**
- **Improved customer delivery times by 22%**
- **Enhanced supplier relationships**
- **Reduced operational downtime**

Anticipated longer term benefits

- **Reduced warranty returns due to improved New Product Development process**
- **Quicker time to market for new products**

The Company

Prior Scientific is the only UK manufacturer of microscopes. Based just outside Cambridge, the company has evolved over a period of more than eighty years. Today, Prior designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of microscopes, fibre optic inspection equipment and precision automated microscopy products including innovative products such as the PriorSpec™ and the ConnCert™.

The company is privately owned and has a subsidiary organisation in the United States; Prior Scientific Incorporated, who are responsible for Sales & Marketing in North and South America.

Prior sells and promotes its products globally and has a distinct mix of customers from OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) distributors to end users. The company operates in a diverse range of markets, from industrial OEM's, education, laboratory, fibre optic inspection and semiconductor markets to name just a few.

The Issue

Prior took the decision to become a registered ISO 9001:2000 Company after increased demand from both existing & potential Customers. ISO 9000 was viewed as a key for improving customer perceptions of Prior as a world leader in microscopy and a gateway to expansion into further global markets.

BSI Case Study on the Benefits of ISO 9000 Registration

The revised ISO 9001:2000 standard fitted in perfectly with Prior's business processes. With 30 new products being developed each year, Prior also considered ISO 9000 would help improve their Research and Development processes and subsequent time to market targets.

Prior initially developed a Quality Plan setting out objectives and time scales in order to achieve implementation of the management system within a period of 8 months. The Scope covered the design, manufacture, supply and repair of optical, scientific and inspection equipment.

The Benefits

"There have been no downsides to the implementation of ISO 9001:2000. Any costs have been far outweighed by the benefits", Barry Langford, Managing Director

One significant benefit is that the major American company who previously approached Prior will become a customer. Overall, customer response to the registration has been very positive.

A Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2001 highlighted the need to improve delivery times as part of their management system. In January 2002, one month after registration, the company improved target product delivery times by 22%.

Furthermore, improved controls for warranty returns and maintenance-modifications for customers have provided trend analysis with respect to product life cycle improvements. The typical life cycle of a product manufactured by Prior is up to 30 years.

"Although still in the early stages, we are already seeing the benefits of the system in terms of improved lead conversion and better relationships with suppliers.", Paul Davis, UK Sales Manager

Critical Supplier relationships have been enhanced as a result of registration to ISO 9001:2000. Suppliers now have a greater understanding of Prior's requirements which has led to improved part specification, and strengthened partnerships for future orders.

As a result of benchmarking the entire management system, it is now easier to provide evidence for top management to make more effective business decisions and develop focused marketing strategies. This enables analysis and continual improvement on all issues e.g. downtime, delivery times, lead conversion.

Improved internal controls and procedures have also led to a decrease in downtime as staff are now more aware of their individual responsibilities and are key members of a multi-skilled workforce.

BSI Role

BSI was primarily chosen for its global coverage of ISO 9000.

Throughout the implementation of the management system BSI has been very responsive and the Client Manager has provided significant help and guidance in all areas of the standard, suggesting additional areas to consider and possible improvements to Prior's original Quality Plan.

Once registration was achieved, BSI has been very helpful in providing marketing support.

Throughout the registration process BSI had demonstrated a good example of customer satisfaction as defined in section 8.2.1 of ISO 9001:2000.

The System

Prior's business management system is based on "end-to-end" operating process philosophy with a well-defined definition of roles and responsibilities.

Throughout the business, the critical issue for Prior has been the drive for staff training and multi-skilling matrices, which in turn have enabled improved performance at each stage and enhanced staff morale.