



Barhale Trant Utilities LLP uses 14001:2015 as an opportunity to re-appraise their business strategy and delivery

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Glen Carlin, Head of Safety, Health, Environment and Quality

At a glance

- Barhale Trant Utilities (BTU) is a relatively new company which was established solely to provide water services to Southern Water.
- BTU has been certified to ISO 14001 since 2010. Having an EMS enabled BTU to develop and implement improvements both to its own working environment and that of its customer.
- In implementing the new ISO 14001:2015, the staff at BTU found that the research they undertook, to see where it did and didn't conform, to be very beneficial – helping them better understand and meet their contractual obligations to their key client and to have a clearer view of both their environmental risk factors and opportunities for innovation.



Customer background

Barhale Trant Utilities LLP (BTU) has been certified to ISO 14001:2004 since 2010. This is partly because a certified environmental management system (EMS) is a requirement of BTU's contract with its strategically key client, Southern Water. However BTU has also found the EMS valuable in its own right. It enables the organization to develop and implement improvements both to its own working environment and that of its customer.

These benefits were also instrumental in spurring BTU on to become early adopters of ISO 14001:2015. "We wanted to make the transition early to increase performance and ensure that we remain at the forefront of innovation," says Glen Carlin, BTU's Head of Safety, Health, Environment and Quality. He adds, "It will protect the environment for our colleagues and communities, and help maintain our competitive edge."

Accordingly, BTU began the journey to adopt the new standard by tracking the development of the draft standard in the year before its final publication. Knowing what would be in the new standard, the organization then looked at its current EMS and conducted a gap analysis to see where it did and didn't conform. This gave BTU the information necessary to begin implementation.

Implementation

BTU focused, first of all, on the scope and context requirements of the new standard. A preliminary analysis covered internal and external issues; interested parties and their needs and expectations; and organizational dimensions.

In terms of internal and external issues, BTU determined its impact on the environment and the impact that environmental factors might have on business. For instance, fossil fuels are an important part of the delivery of BTU's services, as the company manages remote pumping stations where diesel back-up is needed in the absence of a robust electricity supply. The analysis identified BTU's ability to have an impact on climate change through efficient resource use, and also considered external factors such as the availability of fossil fuel and its rising cost.

In relation to interested parties, BTU thoroughly examined their relationship with Southern Water in light of the client's needs and expectations: for BTU to meet its contractual requirements, including compliance and reporting obligations; and to support Southern Water's resource use and carbon management initiatives, as well as its desire for a transparent dialogue on environmental issues. BTU also identified other interested parties whose needs and expectations are important. They include Southern Water's customers, BTU's employees, environmental regulators, such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, NGOs, the media and local authorities.

These considerations fed into the scope statement which covers BTU's projects, the locations from which services are delivered, and a description of the role of management and how it can exercise environmental leadership and influence employees, contractors and BTU's wider supply chain. Environmental obligations are to be listed at a corporate level and on a per project basis, including any client or regulator-specific requirements, as well as any good environmental management practices.

BTU felt that the easiest part of the standard to implement was the clause on leadership. Since its inception, BTU's leaders and senior managers have always been fully engaged and very supportive of the EMS's implementation throughout the business.

Concerning the identification of risks and opportunities, it was felt that the latter would be most difficult. Carlin explains that BTU can clearly determine and mitigate risks, and has a strong commercial understanding of where opportunities can arise. However, further thought and consultation will be needed to help operational and project personnel identify opportunities within individual projects, and ensure these are implemented, monitored and evaluated. Carlin also notes that, historically, greater emphasis has been placed on risk rather than opportunity, creating a risk-focused mind-set.

ISO 14001:2015 looks for a risk management-based planning model to be incorporated into an EMS. Carlin found the reference to ISO 31000:2009 in the new standard's bibliography particularly helpful. While not a mandatory requirement, ISO 31000 provides useful guidelines for developing a risk management system, and provided what Carlin describes as 'useful insights'. BTU is not putting a full risk management system in place but has decided to adopt the PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal, Environmental) framework for identifying corporate risks and opportunity. For example, political risks can arise from decisions made by national government and by regulators such as Ofwat and the Environment Agency. These might concern environmental policy or financial incentives.

BTU also recognizes the need to engage with government policy on initiatives such as the circular economy. Likewise, when reviewing potential environmental risks, BTU has identified that climate change and resource scarcity will negatively impact the delivery of its services, but can also drive opportunities in innovation and competitiveness.

BTU will also be setting out its project-specific risks and opportunities in a document, thanks to an open dialogue with its client. This will identify inherent project risks in terms of environmental impacts, but will also detail the risks according to consequences, the risk's owner, the quantifiable impact, and the mitigation actions, among other factors. It replaces the previous Risk Register which had concentrated on risk to the detriment of opportunities, and which BTU felt didn't provide the balanced view that it expects to have going forward.

Benefits

"BTU is already seeing the benefits of the work done with internal and external interested parties. This has reconfirmed some requirements and identified new ones, and has sharpened BTU's recognition of its compliance obligations."

BTU has also welcomed the opportunity that the transition process provided to revisit its context. This has been beneficial to re-appraising the organization's business strategy and delivery. Going forward, BTU intends to revisit and review the context periodically to ensure that its business and environmental strategies stay aligned.

The organization also believes that the clearer commitment of leadership and the greater emphasis on clarity of responsibility and authority will lead to managers engaging more closely with their teams. This in turn will mean that opportunities are more systematically picked up, which is likely to deliver increased performance.

In terms of savings, it's too soon to quantify specific benefits, but BTU feels that there is room for improvement and that further savings will be found as the new standard is implemented.

Reflections on ISO 14001

BTU learned that early engagement across the organization is extremely valuable. In particular, given the strategic approach of the new standard, it's important to ensure that all levels of management contribute to the EMS and that it's not treated as a 'stand-alone' management system. BTU is looking for an EMS that is fully embedded in its organization and organizational culture.

Glen Carlin also feels that ISO 31000:2009 is really beneficial, as is the Annex to ISO 14001. Both are useful for scoping and risk management requirements. BTU acknowledges that it will need to work continually on balancing risks and opportunities, recognizing that the true benefits of its EMS will come from identifying and acting on environmental opportunities.

Carlin concludes that organizations which already have ISO 14001 will likely not struggle with the changeover to the 2015 standard. However, those that are new to the standard should be able to source valuable information from internet forums, professional bodies or through the help of a good consultant or industry specialist, where budgets allow, to achieve the most effective implementation.

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About ISO 14001

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Suitable for all sizes of organization, this best-selling standard maps out a framework that a company or organization can follow to set up an effective environmental management system (EMS) including policies and objectives. It can help your organization reduce its environmental impact as well as grow your business.

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