

Qooling

ALL ABOUT CONSULTING

8 consultants talk about their
experience in the workfield



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INTRODUCTION

After the success of the e-book with auditors, we decided to put together an e-book in collaboration with consultants. We have spoken to several consultants who work in the field of quality and safety management. These experts have experience in different industries and in different countries. We would like to thank the consultants and everyone involved for their cooperation.

We asked the consultants a number of questions about their experiences of consultancy in their work field. These are general questions about the work that the consultant carries out. In addition, we gathered information about the companies that the consultant guides and their personal lives. Finally, the consultants were asked whether they have any tips for other consultants or for companies in general.

During the interviews, questions surrounded three main topics, namely:

- **General opinion on quality and safety:** Within this topic, the consultants spoke about their opinions about quality and safety, and how they think quality and safety should work in a company.
- **Staff and management:** For this subject matter, we asked the consultants how they think that quality and safety can be incorporated into the employees' daily activities and if they think a consultant can influence the culture in a company.
- **Opportunities and difficulties:** The last topic included questions about what the opportunities and difficulties are within quality and safety management.

We hope you can use the information in your daily tasks and wish you a lot of reading pleasure!

The Qooling team

THE ROLE OF CONSULTANTS

Consultants have a big role in the world of certification and compliance. Especially when companies first start this journey, it can be quite an endeavor, and skilled consultants are there to help. Their knowledge of the different standards or laws that need to be followed helps lots of companies get off to a flying start. The pool of consultants is vast and diverse. They can help with certain laws, provide training on standards, or help companies set up management systems. Most have years of experience in the field before they became a consultant and therefore bring a huge body of knowledge into the organization.

I personally love working with these knowledgeable people, and they always make me learn something new whenever we speak. Not just through their expertise, but also by asking the right questions. I hope you like reading about their experiences and that you will take something away from it.

Nick Appel
Co-founder Qooling

CARL KRÜGER

Qualitation - Oxford, United Kingdom

Carl is a consultant in the United Kingdom, but also works abroad when the occasion requires. Usually, he works with small and medium enterprises (SME). The focus within these companies is to help develop and change the business as it grows. If you want to improve your company, it is essential to change the structure of the business. The most important change is that the right people can make quick decisions, so they don't need to ask upstream every time, and using an ISO system will help with that.

General opinion on quality and safety

Carl views quality as something that needs to be straightforward: "If someone needs to get anything done, such as create a product or perform a service, and they are spending more resources than it generates, the process is inefficient."

Besides efficiency, quality is a key component in every organization. The quality manager should have an important internal role, which should be combined with outside views of the organization. A good way to get the ball rolling is by getting a standard assessment by an auditor.

This way, you can gain awareness on quality and of your own operations and business. Alongside this internal awareness, the overall mindset within the company is key. Business owners make the decision to have a certain vision on the quality and/or safety of the organization.

This decision has to be accepted and properly understood by all the individuals around the organization. It should not be possible to stop working a certain way because it doesn't work for someone. Everyone in the organization needs to accept the new way of working.

Staff & Management

To motivate all the staff in the company to work according to this new approach, it is important to provide training to all employees. When the employees see the improvement in their work, they will become more motivated to do their job.

However, training alone is not only important to change mindset in the long term. You also need to improve salary, change the company culture and the opportunities to develop within the company.

The most crucial thing for Carl is the following: "What is most important is to get everyone not doing what they are told to do, but doing it in a way that they want to do it. Because it makes it so much easier to convince people for the way forward." However, this should be within certain limits.

It's practical to involve the staff of an SME, as you can simply sit down in a room and talk to them all together. Within these types of companies, it is important to motivate the individuals and let them show the other staff that the new way of working really works. Involvement is key, and making sure the team works together.

Opportunities & Difficulties

The experiences that Carl has in the UK is that mainly the older generation is a little bit more difficult to handle. This generation has a lot of experience and believes they have seen it all, even when this knowledge could have become obsolete. An opportunity in the UK is the somewhat strict safety rules, which have an impact on different levels in the organization.

“The problem is that in general, safety controls are much stronger in the UK than in other parts of the world.” This has to do with the mental approach in the UK and not with the standards. However, it has quite an impact on the safety culture within UK companies.

Tip from Carl

If a company has an ISO-standard, it is a great way of getting people to work together and establish a culture. Because involvement in a company needs to be happening on an individual level. When there is an issue, make the individuals aware that they have been very helpful in identifying a problem that the company needs to improve on.

BEVERLY EDMONDS

President of ProcedurePros - United States of America

Beverly is a consultant that mostly guides manufacturing companies. She doesn't work in a specific industry yet, however, most of the companies are aerospace industries that are ISO 9001 or AS 9100 certified.

“To be organized, a good quality software is a must-have. Reminding a person is not automation.”

General opinion on quality and safety

Beverly tries to really meet the requirements of the customers. She is focused on the customers and uses the quality managers to help different teams within the company so that everyone understands the approach of the new system.

It is not only about the setup of the system, but also its efficiency. Sometimes that requires a reorganization of the system and the way of working, and then as a second step working on certification.

The most important part in quality is the process: “A lot of documentation is written, but it is not always with an understanding of the process. The interaction between processes is where many difficulties arise. Therefore, we need to help the leadership team and make sure they understand that everything is connected.”

Staff & Management

Beverly works most of the time within large manufacturing companies. What she likes the most in her job is to involve both the staff and the workplace employees and bring them together in the process.

The best thing to do for a consultant is not to go straight into the boardroom, but to mingle with the employees on the production floor first. Bring the managers to the production, because a lot of managers don't fully understand what is going on in the workplace. Furthermore, it is vital to have a lot of education and training with the staff.

Use non-conformities as a learning moment and don't use them as a punishing stick. If a company wants to improve their business and grow, teamwork is really important. Beverly says the following: “Always clearly communicate that we are one organization and we need to work together; otherwise the company won't function. We have to operate like a team to make it work.” You can achieve this with regular training, education and open communication.

Opportunities & Difficulties

One of the opportunities is that quality mostly has a negative connotation. Quality is not just about dealing with problems, but also keeping in mind the positive outcomes. To improve the mindset and feeling about quality, communication is key.

When employees understand everything that is going on in the company, they will see quality as a good thing. A tip to achieve better communication is having teams meet up around 10 minutes before the shift and discuss everything that happened during the previous shift.

Tip from Beverly

Use the ISO 9001 standard as a framework to organize the current situation, but don't think that merely meeting the standards is enough. It is much better to implement the ISO 9001 Management system in the whole organization and use it to make the company operate better. Develop an action plan, take your time, and after that also follow-up.

“To be organized, a good quality software is a must-have. Reminding a person is not automation.”

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PIERRE SERVAN

Factor Quality - United States of America

In 2011, Pierre started his own company: Factor Quality. They support companies in different types of industries with a wide range of certificates. They also help companies with setting up a quality manual or internal audits.

General opinion on quality and safety

The one thing that Pierre keeps repeating is: “Keep things simple.” It is essential that you look within your own organization. If something works for another organization, that doesn’t mean that it works for every organization. Always think about the processes, the requirements and whether it fits in your organization. Make sure that everything works and that it makes sense to the business.

Pierre strongly believes that every quality management system is built up on three corners, so you get a triangle: The corrective action, internal audits and management reviews. The corrective actions are of course a great way to improve the company. Internal audits are important to see if your business requires the ISO requirement and to identify the opportunities to improve in the business. Lastly, the management review helps identify and carry out actions, which ensures the company moves in the right direction.

Tip from Pierre

Keep your things simple. Simple doesn’t mean painless. Don’t do things because the standards say so, but do it for the organization. Make sure that things make sense to the business. Another tip is to convert the ISO requirement so that it works for your business

Staff & Management

Factor Quality mostly works with small businesses, so they consult directly with the owners. Besides working with the owners, they also work closely with the different process managers. The company tries to show management what is required by ISO, but also wants to make sure it is adding value to the organization.

They try to translate the ISO requirement to make sense for the company and to the processes they work in. After the management understands everything, they then translate it to employees to incorporate it in the day-to-day operations.

Opportunities & Difficulties

“There will be resistance.” Pierre always points out that they will be faced with some kind of resistance during the implementation of a management system. In the United States, they work mostly with small businesses that don’t have the resources. In this type of organization, you must lean on the experience of management.

An opportunity for these types of businesses is to integrate the management system for quality and safety more into the operational system of the organization. The context of the organization within the ISO standard is a section that helps and enables companies to make this integration. The better the management system integrates with operations, the more beneficial it is for small companies, which also helps to align the direction for all the people.

ISAAC KANAGWA

Chief Executive of GoldServe - Uganda

Isaac works for GoldServe in Uganda. They have been doing safety and quality management for over 12 years now. In Uganda, they help to implement ISO 9001 and ISO 45001 standards, and they introduce technologies. On top of this, they provide training to company staff as well. GoldServe guides all types of businesses, from manufacturing to facility management, and each sector has its own unique needs.

General opinion on quality and safety

“Quality can enable companies to leverage more opportunities and improvements.” In Uganda, it’s common to improve business strategies around the organization, because business can grow much better when the strategy is determined. When the strategy is clear, there can be better customer engagement and better intentions of the staff.

In Isaac’s opinion, the most important part of quality is looking at documentation and building a strategy around the element of quality. In other words, you need to look at job management, processes, performance and criteria. Another key component of quality is engagement by everyone in the company.

Staff & Management

To involve both senior management and the employees, a huge aspect within this is engagement and communication across the board. Communication works best within a flat organization structure and in a culture where everyone can speak to everyone. However, different companies have different hierarchies.

GoldServe prefers that organizations adapt the flat communication style, because this is an important motivator for the staff. With flat communication, you can easily involve all employees in the company and get everyone on the same level. With this approach, the employees are more motivated, which leads to better results.

Opportunities & Difficulties

The difficulty in Uganda is the way that quality is implemented. In Europe, quality is part of people’s mindset, they do it almost automatically. In Uganda, however, quality is still often seen as a minor thing due to the lack of standards, as well as the informal nature of many companies and the lack of willingness to change.

The difficulty is it needs to be implemented into the mindset of the Ugandan people: “There are so many opportunities to do things a lot quicker and better here.” New technologies are also a huge opportunity, but also the biggest challenge. The people in Uganda need to understand that technologies and data bring mostly new opportunities to improve business.

Tip from Isaac

In Uganda, consultants need to collaborate. We can help each other and look for technology, adopt to the new age and do things in new ways: “Less of a cost, the business value of QHSE technology is the way forward.”

ALBERTO VEGA

Consultant at manufactures - Mexico

Alberto has worked in the engineering industry for 30 years. His core business is in the plastics, chemicals and automotive industries. Nowadays, he works for a German company and is a consultant for a Japanese manufacturing company.

General opinion on quality and safety

“Quality is everything to me. Not only the product, but also the service of a product and how you can manage a team inside the organization.” In the industries in Mexico, most of the companies need to learn more about quality and also need to grow in leveraging quality. Quality and safety only works when you know about the context of the organization, such as employees and economics.

Quality is not something easy. According to Alberto, it is a complex part of organizations. The most important subjects on quality are: people, behavior and systems. People are a key piece of the puzzle, because almost every time you need to make changes, it is related to behavior and people. Behavior comes down to the way you think and the way you do things. Lastly, systems are related to disciplines and ways of working.

Staff & Management

To make sure that management and the employees are involved, it is good practice to first understand the context of the employee. Second, it is important to get every employee to work at their highest level, which basically comes down to expectations. Not only their own expectations, but also the expectations of the organization in terms of their performance.

But even after making this clear, it is still hard to incorporate quality and safety into the daily activities. One thing that can help is to train employees about the real aspects of quality and safety. Help them develop their skills in this area and learn that not one person is the leader, but that the task is the leader. They need to understand that they really have to do it together. This will lead to better teamwork.

Opportunities & Difficulties

The difficulty in some manufacturing companies is that the production department isn't always aligned with quality. They have the mindset that when quality goes up, productivity will go down. However, quality actually increases productivity because there are much lower production errors.

Also, you need a high-quality product in order to support the market and hold your position in this market. An opportunity, according to Alberto, is that top management needs to be more involved in the business. Sometimes he sees that the top management is not related to the core business.

The main goal for Alberto is to put quality and safety on the agenda of the top management in an organization so it filters through to all levels.

Tip from Alberto

Be consistent. Work on a daily basis and be the person that everybody trusts.

VÉRONIQUE BOUCHER

Véronique Boucher VB - Canada

Since April 2019, Véronique has been a consultant, but she has worked in quality since 2001. She works mostly with small companies that need additional resources and/or expertise in managing their quality system. Her types of customers are mostly medical devices.

General opinion on quality and safety

Veronique's vision on quality and safety is that everyone has to work together. Every department in a company needs to have a quality and safety mindset. Nowadays, lots of companies start to enforce quality requirements (e.g., ISO 13485) later in the process, instead of considering them as soon as possible in their processes.

When you embed the ISO requirements as soon as you can throughout the company processes, it will be so much easier to get certified later down the line. The team is everything on this topic: "You cannot think about everything when you are on your own. Your colleagues need to help to make sure that everything is included. You can't do it all by yourself."

Staff & Management

As a consultant, you have to make sure that you talk to employees from every layer of the organization. This communication gives you a great insight into what is going on in the different sectors of the company. It will also give you a glimpse of the different realities and perspectives of employees and managers.

Because most of the time, there is some form of miscommunication, and being more aware of them will facilitate your work on helping them to improve. Speaking to everyone also allows an evaluation of the involvement of management and the employees.

Tip from Veronique

Nobody is perfect, keep an open mind and question yourself.

When you want your team to work together, it is important to take time training the staff on quality and safety requirements, ensuring common knowledge and language. Promoting the quality management system to employees and their roles within it will make things so much easier. Management needs to communicate the company's objectives and vision to achieve this consistently.

When you communicate clearly and put effort and time in your employees, things will go a lot better and your team will be much more motivated. Be there for the team not only as a boss, but also walk around the operation room. Give them the opportunity to talk to you and make time to listen.

Opportunities & Difficulties

Véronique is from Canada, where the main problem is a lack of resources. Companies need more staff in quality and safety roles. On the flip side, this creates work opportunities and reminds us of the importance of always keeping the risk analysis in mind.

Because of the lack of resources, efforts must be on the right priorities (e.g., potential risks for the patient safety, device performance and durability) and, everyone in the company has to do their part on quality and safety. "You have to work as a team." The big challenge here is that everyone is responsible for quality, but quality is merely a means to an end. The company should place the importance of quality properly within the organization.

ANTHONY MATTHEWS

Managing Director of Charmwood Risk Management - United Kingdom

Anthony has had 10 years of experience in the military, 12 years in logistics and distribution and the last 20 years in risk and compliance. The companies he works with comply with all kinds of ISO standards, everything from health and safety to quality. About four years ago, he came to the conclusion that with his experiences, contacts and clients, he should start his own consultancy company. That's when Charmwood Risk Management was founded. Charmwood provides three types of service options: ISO-management systems, consultancy where they help with audit implementations, information protection and data and help with straightforward health and safety management. Charmwood Risk is based in Cardiff, but has national (UK) and international clients.

General opinion on quality and safety

According to Anthony, QHSE has a couple of essential pointers. First of all, organizations need to restructure themselves. Companies have a quality manager, a safety manager and a health manager and some companies combine these in QHSE managers. If one person is dealing with multiple tasks and responsibilities, this can be really challenging. People struggle with things they need to do and aren't able to follow actions and deliver on those.

An important subject on safety is that the communication is often very weak. Organizations let their health and safety managers look after all of the issues, while many of these tasks should be done line managers. When there is not enough communication from top management with workers, the employees will use their way of how things should be done and QHSE needs to clean up the mess.

Senior management needs to open their eyes to these matters and put this on the agenda of the boardroom. Workers need to know about the importance of safety. This is not just the safety manager's job, but a job for all the employees.

Staff & Management

A part of the approach of Charmwood is that it mirrors what an auditor or a certificate master will do. While speaking with senior management, they go through the strategy, where the business is going and what their vision is. After these initial conversations, the consultant gets a view of what the organization is trying to achieve.

Then they can help them with not only a certification on the wall, but also with implementing this in the business. Concerning the culture, Anthony says that training is the most important thing to change culture: "Training sessions are part of the implementation process, by trying to change the way people work and improve their business."

Opportunities & Difficulties

As mentioned before, there are a number of difficulties within safety management. The consultations and the communication need to be improved. Lots of companies are not embracing safety in the workplace; other priorities are taking over, such as getting the order out of the door. Companies need to make sure that safety is incorporated into the daily activities of the employees to make work really a safer place to be.

Another difficulty, according to Anthony, is the following: “The culture is something that companies struggle with. They need to have an environment where people feel safe and talk about incidents or about feeling depressed. Open environment, open culture. Creating the right environment is a big win.”

Tip from Anthony

“Empowering people. Employees need to take ownership for their tasks; their safety is everybody’s concern, problem and responsibility. The more organizations that can cascade that down to employees, the better.”

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JAN-BERT VAN DE WATER

ValQ training and advice & Brown Paper Audit - The Netherlands

Jan-Bert has over 20 years of experience in the field of quality and safety management. Safety has been an important part of this in recent years. From various internships during his studies, he ended up in quality. A few years ago, he started a consultancy agency to help companies with ISO, SCC and other certificates. For a number of years, they have also been helping people with ValQ by providing training and teaching people skills in the field of quality and safety. ValQ mainly assists companies in construction and industry.

General opinion on quality and safety

According to Jan-Bert, quality management is at the root of every company. Every company is engaged in processes, and during these processes, there are always points of improvement. How tangible you do this differs significantly per company. Jan-Bert strongly believes that quality managers ensure that quality management in a company is successful. In addition, it is necessary that quality is very close to daily practice.

When quality management is added mainly because it has to be done for customers, it takes more time and won't have the great impact on the company it can have. Quality flourishes when it is integrated into the entire business processes, not only something a company does on the site. Make sure you organize the quality system in such a way that the entire company agrees, and everyone contributes.

As a company, you have to have a clear picture, and then you can organize the staff and the processes in such a way that the goals can be achieved. Know your goals and monitor them closely, this will make sure you can adapt to this change.

Staff & Management

If the company's goals are right, it automatically happens that management and employees are concerned with quality every day. Quality becomes the common goal and not something you do besides the other activities anymore. To ensure that this happens, it is important to translate quality into what it means for someone in the workplace.

In addition, it is essential to add quality to existing management processes to incorporate them properly. This has to do with the culture of the company and Jan-Bert thinks the following about consultants and culture: "Yes, I think that consultants can have an influence on the culture even though they are not really part of the company."

ValQ helps companies to reflect on the current culture, and also helps them to improve and to create a better culture in the company. These training sessions really help to improve the culture as a whole.

Opportunities & Difficulties

ValQ notices that lots of companies are looking for some kind of renewal: how can it be different? A lot of quality managers find it difficult to implement that kind of change. Sometimes they look at what a Certification Body would think of this change and lean too much on the opinion of the auditor.

If you, as a quality manager, think that a new approach will help to improve the business, why wouldn't you do it? Quality managers shouldn't think too much about the opinion of the external auditors. Jan-Bert doesn't think that Certifying Bodies will be hard on this, as long as the new method will enable change and improvements.

Tip from Jan-Bert

“Try to set up everything you want to set up based on your own convictions and your own goals. Make sure it always contributes to the direction and purpose of your organization. Then I think you're always right.”

About Qooling

We believe that companies can create better, safer and more secure products and services when they have the right culture. Improving Quality, Safety and Security comes mainly down to having the right culture in place and helping people to thrive.

With Qooling, you provide employees the tools they need on a single platform. The easy-to-use interface helps employees to easily interact with the Management System and provide valuable information. On the other hand, the highly customizable approach of Qooling allows you to leverage the platform the way you see fit.

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