

CASE STUDY

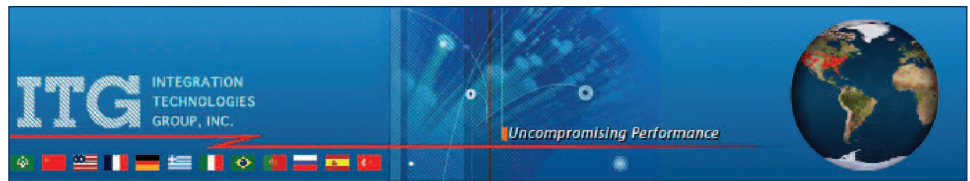
ITG LEVERAGES MULTIPLE CERTIFICATIONS THROUGH INTEGRATION

Background

An ancient philosopher once observed that “the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”¹ Integration Technologies Group, Inc. (ITG) can testify to the truth of that philosophy, as it pursued multiple certifications, one achievement at a time. The difference for the Falls Church, Virginia-based company is every key step led the organization to extend the mile marker, and its journey is now one of continual improvement.

In March 2004, ITG began the drive that led to three ISO certifications and a CMMI Maturity Level 3 designation for software engineering – an effort that solidified and organized the company’s commitment to quality, according to ITG President and CEO Michael Angelakis. Before Angelakis knew about ISO management systems, he was committed to quality issues, but ISO “provided the framework, the methodology, and the step-by-step approach that allowed us to implement” these multiple systems, he said.

ITG was founded in 1984; it has 100 employees at its corporate headquarters from which they manage 4,000 field engineers and technical specialists, as subcontractors or consultants, offering IT services to over 1,100 locations in the United States and abroad. It has earned the U.S. Treasury Small Business Partner



of the Year, Unisys Small Business Excellence, and the IRS Small Business Partner Nominee.

Customer Needs

Some companies struggle to secure top management support for implementation, but at ITG the impetus came from the top. ITG President, Michael Angelakis, valued quality long before ITG’s ISO 9001 implementation. At the end of the day, quality is about each individual doing a good job, and an organization needs to be immersed in that notion, Angelakis said.

ITG announced its intention to seek certification to ISO 9001 in March 2004, and achieved that goal within nine months. The scope of the certificate is “design, service and repair for IT equipment primarily for the Federal Government.”

“We did the first implementation because at the time I viewed ISO 9001 as a management enabler,” Angelakis said. “I saw it as a form of enabling technology ... and I became sold on the idea of

repeatable processes with expected positive results.”

Like many other entrepreneurs, Angelakis acknowledged that organization was not his strength, and the implementation of a Quality Management System (QMS) would help impose the needed discipline through documentation and records control. Earning ISO 9001 certification changed the spirit of the company, he observed.

ITG had no contractual obligations to seek certification; the company did so because it was committed to best practices, he said. But about one year later, ITG was seeking a significant and lucrative procurement that was vital to the organization, and the first requirement was ISO 9001 certification.

“You can appreciate how fortunate I felt that we had it,” he said, adding the

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¹ Quotation from Lao Tzu is found at www.thinkexist.com.

company could never have earned the certification in time to secure the procurement if it already had not achieved certification the previous year.

The success of ISO 9001 led the company to pursue other best practices. ITG earned a CMMI Level 3 Appraisal for software engineering, and certification to ISO/IEC 27001:2005 for implementation of an Information Security Management System (ISMS). On January 15, 2007, ITG earned certification to ISO/IEC 20000-1: 2005 – the international IT Service Management System and its scope was for “service call management for customers.” That certification distinguished ITG as one of the first American companies in the world to have earned these multiple certifications.

“When we learned about ISO 20000 and the value it would add to our service delivery process and as a result to our customers, we made the decision to incorporate it into our existing ISO 9001 and CMMI-based Quality Management System,” Angelakis stated. “We strive to continually improve and strengthen our competitive position in this ever-demanding marketplace.”

“We think we have a critical advantage over our competition,” Angelakis said. “In order for us to comply with all the standards, we had to develop a system to collect, analyze, and process company data. ... All of a sudden, we knew more about our company than we knew before.”

Angelakis added, “We realized the overarching best practice in this country is ISO 9001, and I would say that ISO 20000 is essentially a component of ISO 9001.”

Benefits

Implementation and integration of multiple ISO management systems has given ITG a competitive edge.

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A second benefit to the integrated management systems is improved efficiency, he said. In building the ITG management systems, company officials discovered several redundant/duplicative efforts, and they were able to streamline processes and build efficiencies, he added.

An integrated management system also helped ITG offer transparency to its customers, improving customer satisfaction. Once ITG developed its system for collecting, analyzing, and managing data, it gave its customers the ability to access that information online, including the results of customer satisfaction surveys. This right of entry built customer confidence, Angelakis said.

One area of improvement has been customer satisfaction, he added, noting that ITG has a customer satisfaction rating of 97 percent.

As part of ITG’s implementation process, they developed a process for seeking customer input and providing customer feedback. While Angelakis noted that as

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ITG gets closer to a 100 percent customer rating it is harder to show improvement, the fact the company maintains about 97 percent to 98 percent satisfaction is a real achievement and can be traced to the organization’s commitment to quality as reflected in its ISO efforts.

“Your company [ITG] seems to have remained a company that is very customer oriented and one of the few companies that actually treats its subcontractors in a way that rewards us for our efforts,” one [ITG] customer said.

“We do work for a lot of contractors, and I’d rate ITG at the top of the list,” according to another customer. “On the rare occasions when there are issues, ITG steps up to the plate and gets things resolved. ITG is the most professional group we do work for.”

Another benefit of its certifications is the credibility of a third-party reviewer, Angelakis said. “It is one thing for a company to claim quality or compliance with standards and best practices; it is another for those organizations to demonstrate that third parties independently have attested to that.”

The major benefit of integrating ISO 9001, ISO 20000, and ISO 27001 is that it enables the company “to expand the granularity of the Quality Management System. ISO 9001:2000 is an umbrella framework ... but it does not go into the depth and detail of ISO 20000 or ISO 27001,” he said.

The System

A strong advocate for the QMS approach, Angelakis said, "In my view, 9001:2000 stands alone in the constellation of best practices in that it is applicable to anybody." Whether the company provides painting services or manufactures cars, it will be a better company if it implements ISO 9001, he said.

As an engineering company, ITG was able to easily develop software to meet the various requirements of multiple standards. The company's software, ITG CENTRE is "a world class, SLA based, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform, providing state of the art capabilities across the entire process spectrum of an enterprise. CENTRE offers modules for Incident, Problem, Change, Project, Reporting, Supplier and Configuration Management, as well as support for HR, Time Sheet, Measurements and Analysis, Software/Requirements Development, Inventory, Purchasing, Logistics and Contracts subsystems."

"We have the ability to codify all these rules in our organization's center," Angelakis said, indicating that this capability saves ITG time and resources.

For instance, the software requires an ITG employee who has opened a supplier transaction to evaluate that supplier before

closing the transaction. The system will not allow the program to close without this evaluation. Then, an algorithm in the system takes all the supplier evaluations and calculates a rating for each. Prior to ISO implementation, company officials had to check each transaction individually, which could be upward of 300. Now the process is automated, saving the company numerous employee work hours.

Offering some advice to companies considering integration of these various management systems, Angelakis said that change for any organization is inevitable, and integration of these systems can help companies control that change. Failure to do so could be catastrophic. Angelakis said the first few steps on this journey begins with contacting BSI, reading the literature, and making a personal investment in the quality of the organization. Companies can control change or they can let change control them – ISO provides the roadmap for a better future, he added, urging other companies to join them on their journey.

BSI's Role

Angelakis said selecting BSI as its certification body was an obvious choice because of its superiority in the field. "BSI is, in my opinion, the pre-eminent registrar in the United States by far," he said, noting that ITG has "been very happy with BSI's services."

For example, BSI cherishes its client relationships, and the BSI auditors who have worked with ITG have been exceptionally professional, he said. Additionally, BSI not only devotes itself to quality standards, but it is a quality organization itself, he noted, adding, "Let's not forget the vast majority of standards has emerged from the British Standards Institute." Angelakis also lauded the company's responsiveness to customer needs, indicating that BSI meets the same quality standards that it sets for everybody else in the ISO world.

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