

Case title: Quality management system - a tool for success
Country: Latvia
Organisation: Latvian Environment, Geology and meteorology agency
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Level: State
Sector: General administration

Short description of the case:

Our best practice case shows how the main elements of quality management system have been used for reorganizing the post soviet style organization to developing and competition institution, where all processes are retraced and based on legal national and international standards.

Main feature of the case:

- Developing and managing processes
- Innovation and implementing change

Key words:

Management system, development of organisation, ISO 9001, performance management

Long description

1) Title of the case

Quality management system - a tool for success

2) General description of the organisation and/or project

The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Agency (LEGMA) is a governmental agency that operates on basis of a contract between the Minister of Environment of Latvia and the director of LEGMA. The agency was established on 01.01.2005 by merging 3 institutions – a state agency “Latvian Hydrometeorological Agency”, the Latvian Environment Agency and the State Geological Service. The statute of LEGMA was passed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia (Regulation No 956 of 23.11.2004). Internally, the activities of the agency are regulated by the Rules of LEGMA.

The main tasks of LEGMA are:

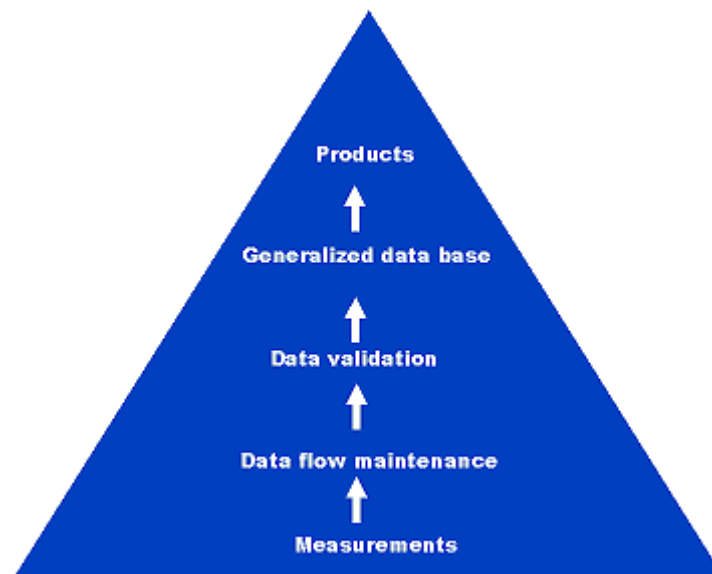
- Ø Implementation of national policy on geology, meteorology, climatology, hydrology, air quality and transboundary air pollution;
- Ø Environmental monitoring;
- Ø Meteorological and hydrological forecasting; Development of a unified environmental information system;
- Ø Provision of environmental information for public;
- Ø Geological supervision of subsoil resources and subsoil use;
- Ø Environmental testing laboratory;

The staff of LEGMA – 502 employees (20.03.2006) – Annex 1 The structure of LEGMA (version 03 from 17.02.2006.)

All quality management processes that cover activities of the former "Latvian Hydrometeorological Agency" are certified according to the ISO 9001 by the Bureau Veritas Quality International. The Latvian National Accreditation Bureau (LATAK) certifies all environment and metrological laboratories of LEGMA according to the ISO 17025.

The top management of LEGMA targeted to certify all remaining management processes that cover activities of the former Latvian Environment Agency and State Geological Service in January 2007.

Our case is prepared based on our experience of implementation of the quality management system (QMS) in the Latvian Hydrometeorological Agency (LHMA), covering all activities of meteorological and hydrological measurements and assessment of the effects of ambient air quality on ecosystems under international, national and regional projects and programs. The products of LHMA are forecasts, hydrological and meteorological analyses and justifications. Picture shows the product realization stages.



3) The main content of the case

We want to demonstrate a possibility to change an organisation of the former soviet style of working into a modern and competitive institution by using the main principles of the quality management.

We deal with the experience of the agency in development, implementation and maintenance of the quality management system.

The introduction of a new management approach to employees, their involvement in activities of the management system as well as the development of appropriate and legal documentation presented the main difficulties in our project.

Since 2005 we are successful in developing and implementing the quality management system in the rest of LEGMA covering processes and activities of the former Latvian Environment Agency and State Geological Service. Our experience makes this process much easier.

We believe that the experience of our case also could be useful to other organisations that face similar consequences of the former soviet style management.

4) The reasons behind the case

Latvia became independent state in early 90s. In 1992 Latvia became a full-scale member state of World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Already then it was clear that the management practices of LHMA should be improved.

4th Quality Conference

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Bigger changes took place in LHMA within the state investment project from 1998 – 2002. 22 new automatic meteorological stations 61 new automatic hydrological stations and 12 automatic air monitoring stations were set up during this time period.

Then the questions arose regarding the tactical and operational documents that mainly were composed of the methodologies and instructions of the former Soviet Union and that were not valid since 1. January 1996. A part of the documents needed revision, but the major part – was unusable.

The project on the unified regulation of rendering of aviation services and certification according to the "Single European Sky" was presented at the same time. The presented project defined requirements of certification to organisations that deal with aviation services. One of the requirements to the organisations was "the quality management system according to ISO 9001 is preferable".

Consequently the top management of LHMA made a strategic decision to implement ISO 9001.

5) The actors behind the case

Top management of the agency played a key role in the development and implementation of the quality management system. The top management made the strategic decision to develop the management system according ISO 9001 requirements and allocated substantial resources for it. The top management appointed the most appropriate person, who has responsibility and authority of the quality management system. As management staff of the agency did not have enough practical experience in the quality management, external experts were involved to realise the ISO project in the most effective way. The external experts were found by organising a tender (a compulsory procedure for subcontracting). So the agency started the ISO project and changing existing business management practises on the year 2001.

The project was realised in a number of sequential stages. At the beginning external experts evaluated existing business practices of the agency and together with the quality manager organised initial training in ISO management systems for management staff and key experts of the agency that resulted in quite active participation of those persons in realisation of the ISO project.

6) The process leading to success

The external experts and the quality manager arranged a number of training activities to introduce main principles and benefits of the quality management to the staff. As a result the staff better understood the following basic things of the quality management:

- The management system ensures meeting of customer requirements;
- Customers can be external – those, who pays money for the agency services, including also governmental and international organisations which receive information from the agency, and internal – different departments of the agency that service each other to realise the agency's final products.

We found out plenty duplicating activities when had identified and described the business processes of the agency. Different persons doing the same activity often gave his/ her own interpretation of the same activity, ensuring that this is the only way of doing it. Tasks, responsibilities and authorities were not appointed and explained in the best way. Some persons in different places were doing the same job in different manners.

We put a lot of efforts to analyse all activities and to consider the necessity of doing them. We had to answer the questions:

What is input of those activities to the final product?

What regulations prescribe doing it?

We found some activities that we could stop to do without any influence on the final products.

Also we had to develop manuals, instructions and guidelines to ensure relevant performance of the agency services.

Example:

Some measurements at observational stations are performed at certain intervals (once in three hours). As the digital watch wasn't available in the past, the observational stations had to check the station's watch by the radio at 8 o'clock in the morning and make records of checking in the Station Records Book. By 2000, when nearly all stations had been provided with reliable watches or equipment for automatic measurements, people still continued checking and taking down the operation in the Station Book. Ironically, the last "long-working" Station Records Book has been found in the archive of the agency.

The Latvian NMS had inherited from the former USSR an enormous array of documents for the performance of measurements and other operations. By the time an up-to-date observational network was established those had become obsolete and illegal and wouldn't satisfy the agency's needs. In this connection, WMO recommendations, methods, guides have been adopted, as have been elaborated and introduced new documents- operational guides, instructions and regulations thus providing a range of information as wide as possible on concrete operations and approaches. That large amount of information was generalized within a year.

A document procedure was worked out to provide with the necessary and actual documents those who need them.

7) Results indicating the success

Good management system helps to ensure appropriate level of the agency services.

The system gives benefits for:

- **The leaders** – they can make decisions and plan business basing on regular reports on the results and trends of business processes according to well defined criteria like resource usage, client satisfaction etc. Now the policy, objectives and criteria are established according to the real needs of the agency, not like at the beginning of the ISO project, when the policy was written very formally.
- **Employees** – they are aware of their rights and duties. They receive appropriate information and materials and services in time and in the right place. Amount of problems and their influence on the final product are decreasing. Forms and databases reduced the time spent for records and finding appropriate information. Overall satisfaction of employees with their jobs according to results of internal questioning is increasing (exception is satisfaction with salaries, but such problems are facing almost all governmental institutions, which budgets for salaries are limited by state regulations).
- **New employees** – the time spent to introduce tasks and working practises to the new employees decreased two times
- **The clients** – turnover of the agency and client satisfaction are increasing and time that clients spend to get the agency services is decreasing constantly.

Table shows income from agency's paid services from 2002 – 2004. The income is almost doubled due the better organization of processes.

2002	2003	2004
259 976*	317 628*	458 324*

LVL (1EUR – 0.7028LVL(2006-03-29))

8) The main obstacles of the case

The main challenges to the elaboration and launching the quality management system were involvement of all employees in the project realisation and their understanding of the developed processes and work practises.

A lot of efforts were made to implement the quality management system and explain its benefits. Much training was done and many official and informal discussions made to explain necessity of all management system activities and importance of job done by every person in the agency. It was very important to explain employees' roles in the management system, because some employees were afraid to lose their jobs. The informal meetings were the most effective ones as agency's people boldly were disclosing their problems.

Through those measures we managed to explain problematic aspects and put trust in the quality management system. While elaborating and introducing the system, we acquired enthusiastic supporters. The agency employees were very active in refining the management system and in improving their work and processes of their departments.

At the beginning the different goals and targets were not communicated to different departments and employees too clearly. Also, quite large amount of bureaucratic documents were elaborated initially and actually it was the burden to the employees. With the help of the employees those problems were solved and preventive measures were taken to avoid them repeating in future.

9) Main sources of inspiration behind the case

The expertise and knowledge of the external experts gave great support to the agency in development and implementation of the management system. The external training of the quality manager also gave a valuable input to the ISO project realisation. Because of the great interest in the successful ISO project realisation, the director of LEGMA attended this training too.

The developed management system, methods and work practises not only help to ensure the product quality, but also protect against unexpected astonishments, for example, litigation because of incorrect, or even correct but unwelcome, information provided to an insurance company, that almost happened before.

Therefore the agency now is looking to such tools like ISO 9004, total quality management and CAF for the further improvement of the management system.

10) The most important lessons learned

The most important things we learned are:

- In two years it is possible to change a former soviet style organisation like LEGMA that uses obsolete documents and has unmotivated staff into well-organised institution that manages its processes according to the international standard ISO 9001.
- Well-established quality management system encourages and motivates staff to improve working practises.
- Involvement of staff is the most crucial thing for the successful implementation of a quality management system.
- Only staff responsible for the business processes can elaborate the most usable documents for the management of the business processes, but often an external assistance is needed to prepare these documents.

LATVIAN ENVIRONMENT, GEOLOGY AND METEOROLOGY AGENCY STRUCTURE

