

# *SELECTING A REGISTRAR*

## **ALL REGISTRARS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL: Tips on Selecting Your Registrar / Certification Body**

In today's challenging economy, companies are necessarily conscious of impacts to the bottom line. Managers recognize that costs to implement and then register their organization to ISO-based standards are outside 'normal' operating costs. Companies are often surprised to learn that registration costs are not as significant as implementation costs. However, your selection of a Registrar has great potential influence on the payback from your investment and ongoing improvements.

Registration is not the end of the assessment process, nor should it be your ultimate goal! The time spent with your Registrar during the ongoing registration process enables them to influence your company's operating system through the impact of impartial, technically competent and well communicated assessments. If you have chosen a Certification Body with significant experience and knowledge of your industry, you are likely to gain significant insight from these audits. If you have chosen a company that cannot offer value over time, you will not achieve full benefit. Selecting the WRONG Registrar can jeopardize your registration, its perceived value, AND the potential for payback from your investment.

It is relatively easy to compare pricing from several Registrars and much more complex to compare the potential impact of the Registrar on your company's management system. In establishing selection criteria, more than twenty categories were identified in a recent independent survey of Registrars' services. The Oxbridge survey (an independent company) can be reviewed at: [www.oxbridge.com/registrars.asp](http://www.oxbridge.com/registrars.asp). The results showed that:

***All Registrars are NOT Created Equal.***

### **SOME FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN SELECTING YOUR REGISTRAR:**

**Role of Consultant in Selection of Registrar** Your consultant can provide you a list of recommended Registrars and will be able to assist you in streamlining the selection process. Your company will be dealing with the Registrar over time, so be sure your personnel communicate directly with the Registrar about the proposal and make sure your company completes the financial evaluation.

**Avoid Conflict of Interest** Avoid using organizations with the same management for your consulting and training services as well as for registration. Conducted by the same organization, these activities can constitute a conflict of interest that could later jeopardize your registration.

**Consider Only Accredited Registrars** In the U.S., the primary accreditation body is ANAB (formerly ANSI/RAB). Other leading Accreditation Bodies are RvA and UKAS. The International Automotive Task Force (IATF) describes its authorized Registrars through use of the phrase 'Recognized to conduct registrations to TS 16949' instead of 'Accredited.'

***Beware of unaccredited registrations!*** Unaccredited assessments are not recognized in industry because they are not based on, or disciplined by, the stringent accreditation process. Unaccredited registrations will cost less, but have no perceived value. It is not enough to learn that the Registrar is accredited. Be sure to

verify that the Registrar is accredited to the standard(s) of interest to your company and to your company's industry code(s). Websites listing authorized Registrars and their scopes include: [www.anab.org](http://www.anab.org) and [www.iaob.org](http://www.iaob.org) (for TS 16949) [www.rva.nl](http://www.rva.nl) and [www.ukas.com](http://www.ukas.com).

**Industry Experience, Background, and Expertise** Make sure your Registrar is well-established and its business is growing. Be sure the Registrar has made a significant investment in its management system through accreditations and that it continues to invest in its technical expertise.

If yours is a small business, it is even more important to use a Registrar recognized in industry so your achievement will be respected by your customers. You will not need to compromise on the quality of Registrar you select based on the fact that you are a small business. Ask about small business programs.

**Auditors** To your company, the Lead Auditor is the most visible representative from the Registrar. It is critical that you are guaranteed satisfaction with your auditors. Some Registrars assure auditor consistency while others make long-term Lead Auditor assignments. Frequent changes in auditors can impact the time required for your personnel to support the audits and the value of the audits over time.

Auditors must be properly qualified for your standard(s) and industry code(s). Subcontract Auditors are used by a number of Registrars making it feasible for them to access a pool of auditors each with strong industry experience. Location of the auditor is important to your bottom line as well as to the ease of scheduling services to your account. Check into the Registrar's process for auditor qualification, training and ongoing evaluation.

**Financial Considerations** Uncover potential hidden costs. Ask about: any penalty fees to change audit dates; costs for travel time and/or administrative costs to be added to incurred expenses; fees for the Registrar's use of the marks; and, fees to terminate the contract. Make sure quotes address your questions. Learn about the Registrars' payment terms. Some require payment in advance of the services.

**Administration Aspects** Registrars' administrative processes include: helping ensure your registration remains current by performing audits on schedule; answering your technical questions; processing corrective actions according to required timelines; and, processing certificates promptly. Some Registrars require oversight of reports by management outside the U.S. in order to issue certificates. Consider the Registrar's support organization, check references, and incorporate the results of independent surveys.

**SUMMATION:** The purpose of this article is to make the reader aware of the importance of Registrar selection. We hope you will find the described criteria helpful. Partnering for registration with a technically competent service-oriented Registrar will help your company realize tangible benefits from its registration such as:

- Becoming more cost-effective, efficient and resilient
- Improving key business and customer satisfaction measures
- Improving internal communications
- Improving product and process quality through monitoring of progress toward goals
- Gaining a passport to the global market

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