

Media Quality Management Certification – An Innovative Approach

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Abstract

In the first part of the paper the characteristics of media (mass media and public media) and their important role in today society are analyzed. Information is a basic human right, which is essential to social development and democracy. Media - particularly radio and television, being the main source of information of most people around the globe - have a special responsibility to ensure that this right is fully enjoyed in the 21st century. Specifically, mass media must: - Disseminate accurate information and knowledge as widely as possible - Offer a lively social and political debate at the local, national and global levels. The essential role of media in social development and democracy is widely recognized, but political and economic powers often hamper their most important service to society, which is to give a faithful representation of the world, to induce citizens' participation in political decisions, and to create an open space for democratic debate. Independence and accuracy of information, quality and creativity of programmes and publications are keys to the mission of print, broadcasted and electronic media. It is not acceptable to see them reduced either to propaganda outlets or to entertainment carriers without content. The authors mention that, in order to assist broadcasters and press and magazine publishers in resisting outside pressures and serving society efficiently, a group of prominent media professionals have introduced two universal quality management standards, ISAS BC 9001: 2003, specially designed for broadcasters and internet content providers, and ISAS P 9001: 2005 for print media. Those "tools to generate trust" will give the public an internationally recognized guarantee that the content it watches or listens to has been produced in accordance with a world standard of good governance within the media. Media themselves, by submitting their internal quality processes to a neutral, independent, professional control, will increase their credibility for a larger audience. This is the basis upon which the Media and Society Foundation, a Geneva-based nonprofit institution created by media professionals, has launched, some years ago, two international quality media management standards, ISAS BC 9001 and ISAS P 9001. They are completed by a set of guidelines, collecting the best practices used all over the world within the media industry. ISAS BC 9001 and ISAS P 9001 are adaptations of ISO 9001, the world reference for quality management systems, which, in the last twelve years, has been adopted by more than 1 200 000 companies, both public and private, in 180 countries. In the second part of the paper the characteristics of the ISAS BC 9001 and ISAS P 9001 standards are analysed in detail. The authors outlines that, in addition of being ISO 9001 compliant, the standards are focused on media companies, measuring the degree to which they meet the following criteria: - Satisfaction of viewers-listeners-readers; - Quality and accuracy of information; - Quality and diversity of other types of programming; - Innovation and creativity; - Independence and transparency of management; - Promotion and respect for ethical rules; - Representation of national minorities; - Universal access; - Social relevance; The standards ISAS BC 9001 and P 9001 measure how radios, televisions, newspapers, magazines and internet content providers meet the ISO 9001 criteria of good management, while at the same time respecting specific media quality criteria, which are universally recognized. It is important to

underline that the standards ISAS BC 9001 and ISAS P 9001 set clear, measurable objectives. The first step towards ISAS BC 9001 & P 9001 certification is the evaluation of present management systems, viewed from three separate and complementary angles: - Efficiency and performance, focussing on the costs of quality - Perceptions of the management system by personnel, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders - The specific criteria of the ISAS BC 9001 & P 9001 standard mentioned above On the basis of this evaluation, companies will be given detailed recommendations for improvement that should be implemented to meet the requirements of ISAS BC 9001. In the last part of the paper the evolution and the future of these standards are analysed. The international Standardization Committee for media quality management agreed on merging ISAS BC and P 9001 standards into one, serving all media. Taking into account the various feedbacks coming from media users (40 organizations) and the changes introduced in ISO 9001:2008 version, the panel of experts met in Geneva in September 2009 to review and update the former ISAS BC 9001:2003 (for broadcasting industry) and ISAS P 9001:2005 (for print media) standards. Their merging into one revised standard, called ISAS BCP 9001:2009 reflects the evolution of modern media organizations towards multimedia and work convergence.

Keywords: Democracy, Mass Media, Print Media, Broadcasting industry, Quality Management, Standard, Certification, Convergence, Social Responsibility