Oxebridge Quality Resources, Inc.

The ISO 9001 Alphabet Soup:
Understanding the International Forces That Control Your Certification's Destiny

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THE WORLD OF ISO 9001: AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT ALL THE PLAYERS

For many companies, their understanding of ISO 9001 ends with whatever their third-party auditor tells them. There may be an informed quality professional on staff or a consultant advising them, but the ultimate "voice" for ISO 9001 is their registrar.

*Believe it or not, most of these players don't have **your** best interests in mind, but rather their own.*

This view is flawed, however. There are far more "players" in the world of ISO 9001 than just a company's registrar. Understanding who those players are, their roles and responsibilities, and – perhaps most importantly – who controls whom, is key to understanding how to maintain the validity of your organization's ISO 9001 certificate, and its future. You see, believe it or not, most of these players don't have your best interests in mind, but rather their own.

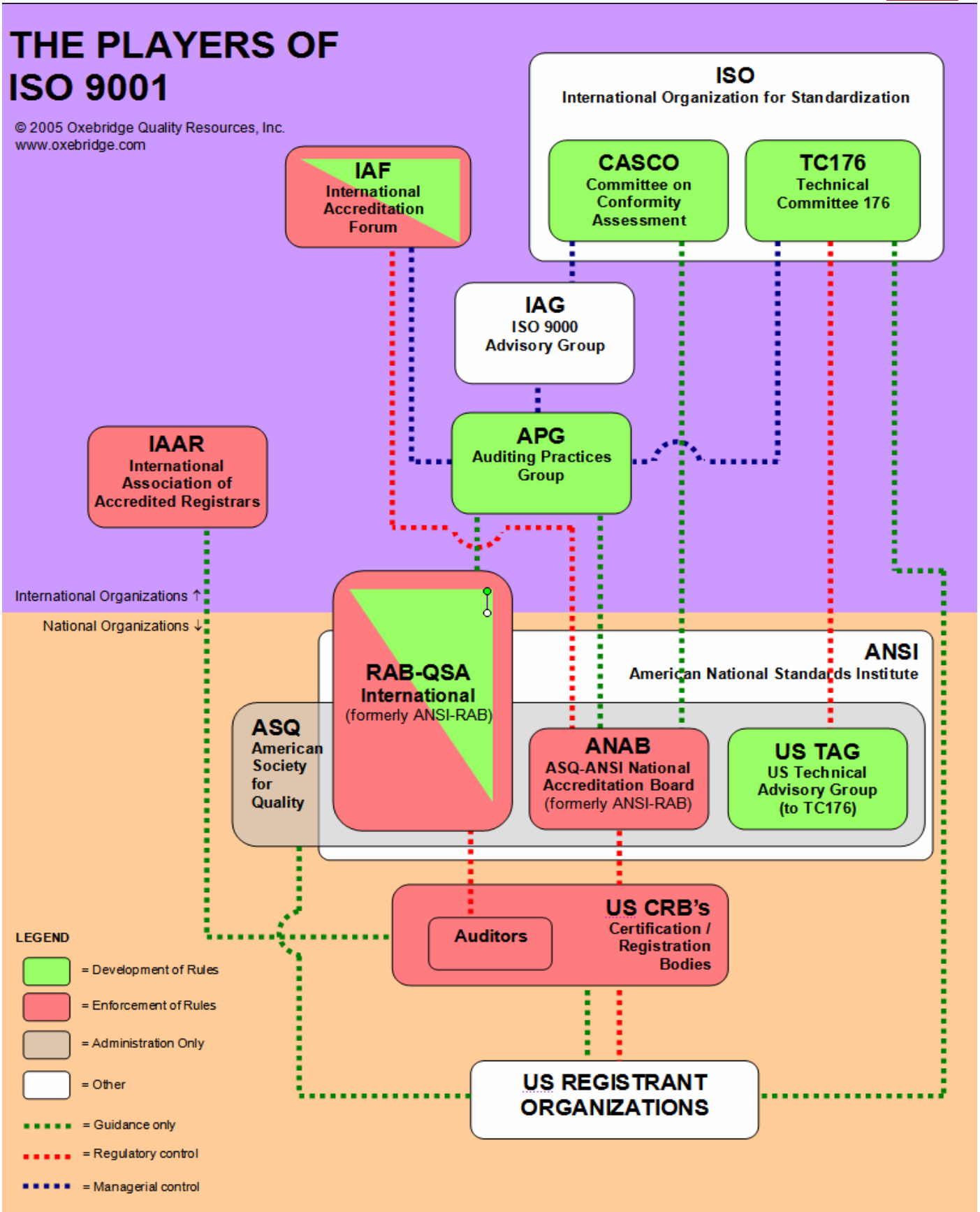
The reasons for this are unclear. It is a fact that many of these organizations are non-profit or not-for-profit organizations. That status tends to obscure the fact that even in non-profit corporations the officers can take draw a significant salary. This fact introduces some elements that are contrary to the needs of ISO 9001 end users, such as cronyism and careerism. Attend an ISO 9000 conference and you will many of the same individuals at each one, year after year.

Other organizations are simply massive, international bureaucracies, crippled under the weight of their size and makeup.

This document endeavors to spell out the major international organizations that develop, deploy and control everything related to ISO 9001. It intentionally makes the assumption that the reader knows nothing about any of the organizations, so as to make the presentation as clear as possible. It is also focused on an American readership, although international readers should gain some insight after reading it.

Finally, it is limited in its discussion to ISO 9001, the basis for quality management certification, and not the other documents within the ISO 9000 family, nor any sector specific variants.

Before we begin, let us look at a master diagram of the relationships between all the players. If the chart looks complicated, that's because it matches reality.


THE PLAYERS OF ISO 9001
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ISO
International Organization for Standardization
CASCO
Committee on Conformity Assessment
TC176
Technical Committee 176
IAF
International Accreditation Forum
IAG
ISO 9000 Advisory Group
APG
Auditing Practices Group
IAAR
International Association of Accredited Registrars
International Organizations ↑
National Organizations ↓
RAB-QSA International
(formerly ANSI-RAB)
ANSI
American National Standards Institute
ASQ
American Society for Quality
ANAB
ASQ-ANSI National Accreditation Board
(formerly ANSI-RAB)
US TAG
US Technical Advisory Group
(to TC176)
Auditors
US CRB's
Certification / Registration Bodies
US REGISTRANT ORGANIZATIONS
LEGEND
= Development of Rules
= Enforcement of Rules
= Administration Only
= Other
= Guidance only
= Regulatory control
= Managerial control

I want to emphasize something: the relationship map on the previous page is our company's best attempt at simplifying the relationships between the international organizations for general consumption. Again: ***this is the simple version***.

To our knowledge, no one has ever tried to map the relationships fully, and even this diagram fails to capture all the intricacies of the various managerial powers each organization wields or yields. In some cases, the full extent of the relationships isn't even publicly known, although one suspects that a more in-depth investigation of financial matters may shine a brighter light on things. This guidance document does not intend to attempt such an endeavor. A future work is planned by Oxebridge to "follow the money" in order to better understand the impact of the relationships on the end users of ISO 9001.

THE PLAYERS IN BRIEF

If one were to grossly oversimplify the player structure, you would see there are four groups:

Group	Governed By
Registrants	ISO 9001
Registrars	ISO GUIDE 62
Accreditors	ISO GUIDE 61

- The **registrant** – this is the organization obtaining (or maintaining) ISO 9001 registration. These are the ***users*** of ISO 9001 – in effect, its customers. In all likelihood, you (the reader) are part of this group.

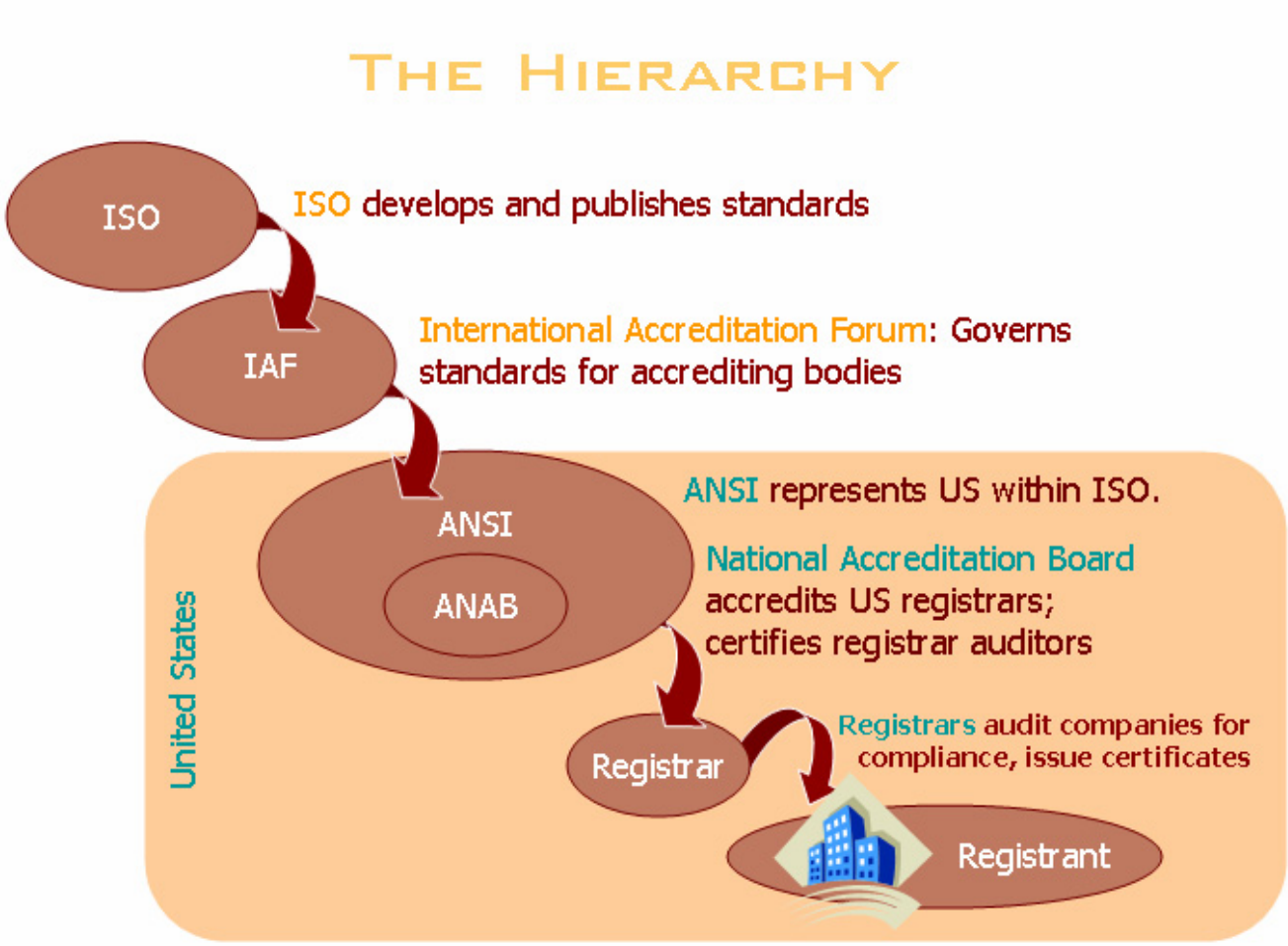
- The **registrar** --- this is the organization that audits your conformance to ISO 9001 and issues the resulting certificate. BSI, QMI and Lloyds Register are examples of registrars operating in the US. Registrars are referred to as "CRB's" (certification/registration bodies) or sometimes "CB's" within the industry. Registrars are not required to be ISO 9001 certified themselves, but instead must comply with ISO/IEC Guide 62 which defines the requirements for organizations performing registration/certification services. So, yes, registrars must follow basic rules, too.

- The **accreditation body** --- this is the organization that accredits (and audits) the registrar, to ensure they maintain conformance to ISO Guide 62. In the US, the chief accreditor is ANSI-RAB. Accreditation bodies (or "AB's") are not subject to ISO 9001, but instead to ISO/IEC Guide 61[1] .

The fourth group is **everyone else**. These include international organizations such as IAF, which attempts to provide some measure of oversight of accreditors, and ISO, which develops the standards governing registrants, registrars and accreditors. Other support organizations and committees are included in this category.

[1] *At press time, ISO 17011 and ISO 17021 were being developed to replace ISO Guides 61 and 62 respectively. A draft of ISO 17021 calls for registrars to adopt ISO 9001 as well, but this has been denounced by ANSI, causing some controversy.*

Here is another representation of the key players, from the viewpoint of a registered company:



As you can see by comparing the two illustrations, the second one leaves out many "behind the scenes" organizations. The problem is that even if you are familiar with the usual suspects (registrant, registrar, accreditor, ISO), there are a number of other organizations with a direct impact on your ISO 9001 certificate and it's future that you may not be aware of.

Given that, let us now let look at ***all*** of the players in depth.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

ISO

The International Organization for Standardization[2] (ISO) is responsible for publishing standards that are voluntarily adopted by countries throughout the world. ISO is structured very much like the United Nations: governed by its Central Secretariat in Geneva Switzerland, it is comprised of representative "member bodies" from 148 countries. In almost all cases, a country's member body is also that country's ***national*** standards organization; for example, the United States' member body is ANSI.

When it comes to the attention of either ISO or its member bodies that a subject or technology may need standardization or guidance, ISO convenes meetings and committees to develop an international consensus on the subject. Say, for example, a new technology for invisibility were developed and that the world decided that a standard was necessary for how to measure invisibility. ISO would convene a proper committee, comprised of representatives of the member countries, to poll them for a consensus on how to measure invisibility. Once an agreement was made (not an easy task, as you can imagine), the finished result is published as an ISO standard.

But remember this: ISO itself does not perform any auditing (or "conformance assessment.") It publishes the consensus results of its member countries, usually as standards or guidance documents.

Remember, ISO itself does not perform any conformance assessment. It only publishes the consensus of its member countries, as "standards."

Again, the standards released by ISO are ***consensus*** documents: they have been developed by "Technical Committees" (or "TC's") which are populated by representatives from those member bodies.

ISO's Technical Committees are numbered; the TC responsible for the authorship and revision of ISO 9001 is TC176. We will discuss TC176 in more detail shortly.

ISO also has what it calls "Policy Development Committees," the roles for which are self-explanatory. These are also populated by representatives from the member bodies. Because of the

[2] *Note: ISO has a sister organization, the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) whose function is to develop and publish standards related to the electronics industries. As a result, ISO is sometimes referred to as ISO/IEC. For the sake of clarity, I have dropped the IEC suffix for this document.*

limited number of people representing each country, it is likely (and probably common) for an individual to be on a number of Technical Committees and/or Policy Development Committees. Obviously, such a person wields a lot of power in the international standards development arena.

CASCO

One of ISO's Policy Development Committees is the Committee on Conformity Assessment, or "CASCO." CASCO --- which is sometimes referred to as "ISO/CASCO" --- has multiple roles, but we shall only concern ourselves with those related to ISO 9001.

In this capacity, CASCO is responsible for studying methods used by registrars for assessing conformity of management systems to ISO 9001; in English, this means they figure out ways for registrars to audit registrant companies. It also is responsible for preparing international standards on the methods registrars use to audit registrants, and the methods accreditors use to accredit the registrars. So whereas ISO develops the standards that impact your company, CASCO develops the standards that govern registrars and accreditors.

To this end, CASCO maintains permanent liaisons with TC176, the authors of ISO 9001. This ensures that CASCO is informed of all happenings related to the development and changes of ISO 9001.

CASCO meets formally once per year, and then breaks into smaller workshops or committee sessions throughout the year.

Whereas ISO develops the standards that impact your company, CASCO develops the standards that govern registrars and accreditors.

CASCO is comprised of a handful of permanent "standing groups" and "working groups," the latter of which are convened as necessary; these groups are also numbered. The CASCO Working Group 21 is responsible for development of ISO 17021, the standard being developed to govern the actions of registrars.

Finally, CASCO-developed standards have been incorporated, by reference, within the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, giving CASCO a significant endorsement on the world political stage. You may not have heard of CASCO, but you've certainly heard of the WTO.

Like ISO, CASCO has no authority over the users of its standards. It merely gathers consensus information and publishes the results.

IAF

ISO has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Accreditation Forum, or IAF. The IAF's role is to standardize the activities and methodologies of accreditation bodies. The goal, then, is to ensure that the United States' ANAB (formerly ANSI-RAB) maintains the same level of oversight and technical proficiency in monitoring US registrars as, say, India's NABCB does for Indian registrars. The aim is to ensure consistency in the validity of ISO 9001 certificates worldwide by making sure accreditation bodies are all working to the same rule book.

While the IAF does not develop standards --- that would create a conflict with ISO --- it does publish what it calls "Guidance Documents" on expectations for ***implementation*** of applicable standards. Where ISO has published Guide 62 (the rules governing registrars) and Guide 61 (the rules governing accreditors), the IAF has likewise published[3] *IAF GD1: Guidance on the Application of Guide 61* and *IAF GD2: Guidance on the Application of ISO Guide 62*.

IAF's role is to standardize the activities and methodologies of accreditation bodies.

Relative to this article, accreditation bodies that sign on with the IAF agree to two things: first, to abide by the requirements the IAF GD1 for their own organizations, and second, to ensure registration companies abide by the requirements of the IAF GD2. The IAF boasts, "*Certificates issued by bodies accredited by members of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) are relied upon all over the world because the MLA assures customers that the certificate is credible*." [4]

This places the IAF in a position between ISO and the accreditors. However, this is also the level at which some of the chain's links break loose.

For example, while registrants are audited by registrars, and registrars are audited by accreditors, IAF member accreditors are only required to undergo "peer surveillance" against the requirements of the GD's and related standards. These "audits" are conducted in accordance with internal IAF procedures. However, peer surveillance is a weak substitute for third party verification by a higher authority with punitive powers. Technically, poor results from peer surveillance ***could*** cause an accreditation body to lose its place in the IAF, but since IAF membership is almost invisible to ISO 9001's end

[3] *At press time these have not been published yet. IAF is still working according to Guide 61 and 62.*
[4] *Source: www.iaf.nu*

users, who would know? Do you even know now if the accrediting body overseeing your registrar is an IAF member?

IAF peer surveillance audits are only required once every four years, *a remarkably long period of time.*

Complicating matters more is the fact that accreditation is a competitive market, resulting in bitter rivalries and corporate mergers. For example, ANAB's stated goal is to globalize, meaning that even though it is an American accreditation body, it plans to compete with other accreditors throughout the world. As part of its plans to do so, ANAB has already entered into cooperative agreements with similar organizations in countries other than the US. This means that during an IAF "peer review," it is possible that the auditor may be from a company that is a ***partner*** with the auditee; on the other hand, the auditor could be from a ***competitor***, forcing the auditee to hide pertinent information. Both scenarios raise questions on the validity of that review. Will a competing accreditor unfairly "beat up" its rival during peer review? Will a partner give the accreditation body "a pass" during its review? With the legitimacy of ISO 9000 relying ultimately on that IAF peer surveillance process, these questions must be addressed by the parties concerned.

Finally, IAF peer surveillance audits are only required ***once every four years***, a remarkably long period of time given that most registrants undergo surveillance by their registrars every six months. It's safe to say that the IAF's peer review process is not exactly robust. And because the IAF is answerable to no one, it has no motivation to improve.

TC 176

As we mentioned, ISO includes various technical committees that author and revise standards; the technical committee responsible for the ISO 9000 family of standards is TC176. Currently 75 countries participate in TC176, and another twenty are "observer countries."

TC176 is comprised of three subcommittees:

TC 176/SC 1	Concepts and terminology
TC 176/SC 2	Quality systems
TC 176/SC 3	Supporting technologies

As a result, Subcommittee 2 (SC2) is the one we are most concerned with, as it is tasked with the job of updating ISO 9001. Only 59 countries are active participants in SC2, with nine others acting as "observers."

Drilling further down, TC176/SC 2 is currently split into three active working groups:

- Working Group 15: Quality principles and their application to management practices
- Working Group 18: Development of "consistent pair" of quality assurance and quality management standards
- Working Group 21: Guidelines for quality plans (responsible for revising ISO 10005)

TC176's American delegates come from the US Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Other nations have different names for the delegations that represent their countries on TC176. We will discuss the US TAG shortly.

The membership roster of TC 176 is secret. As a result, the membership may not be statistically representative of the user base of ISO 9001.

TC176 has taken on a new role, as of 2004: quasi-official interpreter of ISO 9001. As the authors of ISO 9001, a position giving it unique credibility for interpreting the standard, TC176 has begun releasing official interpretations of clauses within ISO 9001:2000. However, it is uncertain whether or not this is just bluster since there is no official burden placed on registrars to ***adopt*** the TC176 interpretations. Still, the interpretations --- available on the TC176 website --- are important tools in any ISO 9001 user's toolbox.

TC176 is under no external scrutiny. Its membership roster is secret (requests by outsiders for such a roster go unanswered), except for when individuals boast of serving on the committee in their resumes, book jackets or keynote addresses. There is no minimum criteria for membership in the committee, meaning anyone with the right connections can author the ISO 9001 standard, regardless of their experience – or lack thereof. The membership may not be statistically representative of the user base of ISO 9001, meaning there is no requirement to have *x* number of members from the service industry vs. *x* number for manufacturing, etc.

When TC176 fails in any of its stated mandates, there is no repercussion. In fact, TC176 has demonstrably failed in one of its mandates – to minimize the proliferation of sector-specific standards outside of ISO 9001 – yet in 2004 ISO granted the committee an achievement award nonetheless.

It should be of concern to all user organizations of ISO 9001 that the authors of the standard are unknown, unaccountable, and quite possibly out of touch with current trends in industry.[5]

[5] *At press time, the author had been notified of his acceptance into TC 176. Future Oxebridge publications may therefore be able to provide more in-depth information on the committee.*

IAAR

The International Association of Accredited Registrars (IAAR) is a more loosely-structured organization comprised of registration bodies. The aim of IAAR is to promote communication between registrars and to ensure consistent interpretations and activities amongst its members. In this way, the IAAR's activities closely mimic those of the IAF, although the IAF's members are accreditors while the IAAR are registrars.

The association is also open only to ***accredited*** registrars, giving more credence to the concept of registrar accreditation.

Member registration companies sign onto a memorandum of agreement to join IAAR, and are therefore held accountable to the IAAR's decisions. However, this is nothing more than a "registrar industry" trade organization of sorts, and has little impact on the end users of ISO 9001.

The IAAR made some waves in 2004, however, when it floated an idea amongst its members that they may want to require ISO 9001 registered companies to have their internal auditors professionally certified in the same manner as professional, third-party registration auditors. This would have added additional costs to ISO 9001 certified companies in order to send their internal auditors to accredited training. Fortunately, the idea seems to have lost steam and nothing else has been heard about the subject.

Had the IAAR made such a requirement, its member registrars – which include almost every major registration company in the world – would have had to impose the IAAR interpretation on their clients throughout the world. This would have opened up the IAAR as an interpretive body of ISO 9001, something it is not chartered to do; instead, IAAR should focus its activities on the interpretation of the rules governing registrars and auditors. But, again, this problem seems to have been dodged for the moment.

IAG

Because ISO 9001 is such a big part of ISO's repertoire, it holds special significance. It's safe to say that ISO 9001 is ISO's "biggest seller" and the standard that has garnered ISO the most international attention. ISO's other works and services will likely always remain in the shadow of ISO 9001.

As a result, ISO developed the ISO 9000 Advisory Group (IAG), a special international committee dedicated to overseeing issues and problems specific to ISO 9001. The IAG

is a combined effort of TC176, CASCO and the IAF. Its membership roster is unknown and unpublished, which raises some concern given the failure of the group to act on the declining growth rate of ISO 9001 certificates worldwide.[6] Its mandate is "to identify and react to any perceived threats to the credibility of ISO 9001:2000."[7]

In that capacity, the IAG continually monitors the world's perception of ISO 9001 and its usage, reporting back to its parent organizations on anything that harms the image or reputation of ISO 9001.

In 2002, the IAG reported that auditing to ISO 9001 by registrars was poor. Interpretation and understanding of the ISO 9001:2000 standard was inconsistent and difficult. The fear was that continued poor auditing would invalidate the credibility of ISO 9001 certificates worldwide. The IAG proposed to form an Auditing Practices Group (APG), a proposal which was adopted by TC176 and the IAF.

APG

The Auditing Practices Group held its first meeting in February 2003. It defines itself as "an informal group of quality management system experts, auditors and practitioners, drawn from TC 176 and the International Accreditation Forum." [8]

The APG publishes various guidance papers on how auditing to ISO 9001:2000 should be conducted. Topics include "Understanding the Process Approach" and "Auditing Continual Improvement." The APG document set is a work in progress, with new interpretation and guidance documents being released periodically.

The APG view of auditing is not binding in any way, however, and the APG website is replete with disclaimers. While the APG may have been formed by TC176 and the IAF, its opinion papers carry no weight, and registrar auditors may ignore them completely without penalty.

The deployment of the APG shows some good intentions and progressive movement on the part of the ISO 9001 hierarchy.

Still, the deployment of the APG shows some good intentions and progressive movement on the part of the ISO 9001 hierarchy.

[6] *Source: http://www.oxebridge.com/news.asp?ID=224*
[7] *Source: http://www.irca.org/inform/issue3/BHenry.htm*
[8] *Source: http://isotc176sc2.elysium-ltd.net/APG_index.html*

THE AMERICAN SCENE

ANSI

The American National Standards Institute is the domestic US equivalent of ISO. It publishes standards, but only those intended for internal consumption within the United States. With an annual budget of about $18 million, ANSI is not a part of the federal government, but instead a private, non-profit 501(c) charitable organization that is recognized by the US government; this is somewhat different than in many countries where the domestic standards body is an official government entity, funded by tax dollars. ANSI is not, however, devoid of taxpayer money: in 2002 the Institute reported that that it received over one half million dollars in US federal grants.[9] ANSI's primary reported form of income is from sales of its standards.

Organizations with non-profit 501 (c) "charity" status, such as ANSI, are not immune from lavishing large salaries on its executives.

As mentioned earlier, organizations with non-profit "charity" status are not immune from lavishing large salaries on its executives. In 2003, ANSI's CEO Dr. Mark Hurwitz received over $500,000 in compensation, and Senior VP Frances Schrotter received over $250,000. In total, ANSI claimed $2.3 million on salaries for 2003.[10]

As a (somewhat confusing) technicality, when ISO releases a standard such as ISO 9001, ANSI must simultaneously release its identical version within the US, however it is called ANSI/ASQ/ISO Q9001:2000. Without this step, the ISO 9001 standard is not officially recognized in the US.

ANSI has been blessed by the US government as the official representative organization to ISO and the IAF.

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[9] *Source: http://public.ansi.org/ansionline/Documents/News%20and%20Publications/Brochures/ANSI-2002_Ann-Rpt.pdf*

[10] *Source: ANSI filing form 99C for 2003.*

ASQ

The American Society for Quality plays a powerful, and complicated, role in ISO 9001. Founded in 1946 as an industry organization for QC professionals, the Society later began to take on larger responsibilities. It helped establish the Baldridge Awards, and is now the sole administrator of that program. In 1989 it formed the Registrar Accreditation Board (RAB), which in 2005 became ASQ-ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB.)

RAB is now a part of ANSI, but the functional link between ASQ and RAB has not been completely severed, however. ASQ still provides office management and other support services to ANAB, and the two share the same address in Milwaukee WI. (In fact, calls to RAB are often answered with the phrase, "Thank you for calling the American Society for Quality.")

ASQ's financial structure is dauntingly complex. Technically it is a member-supported professional organization, but the Society relies on corporate sponsorship to some degree. Legally, ASQ is a 501(c) like ANSI, with its CEO getting over $300,000 per year in compensation. However, members pay annual dues, and the Society sells a growing array of products and services. Finally, ASQ periodically sends out calls for additional member donations, making it an unusual blend of direct sales, member dues, member donations and third party funding.

It is uncertain how ASQ funds its ANAB support activities.

ANAB (Formerly RAB)

In 1989 the ASQ formed the Registrar Accreditation Board (ANSI-RAB), whose function was to accredit registration companies. Prior to that time, anyone could start an ISO 9001 registration company and perform their activities any way they chose; RAB's goal was to accredit those companies and certify their activities, at least within the US.

In 1991, in order to ensure the RAB was suitably "official" and not seen as just a satellite activity within the ASQ, the Society managed to formalize the relationship between RAB

and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI.) Because ANSI has been authorized by the US government, RAB's accreditation programs thus became semi-official national activities. (There is, however, nothing stopping another organization from offering accreditation services in the US.)

In 2005, RAB split into two separate organizations: ANSI/ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) and RABQSA. The split came about after some international bodies criticized RAB for conducting both accreditation and training services. The issue is complex, but in short it was seen as a conflict of interest for a RAB auditor to cite a registrar on an issue that might then be resolved by attending a RAB training course. To resolve this, RAB's training activities were split off as RABQSA (see below), and ANAB was formed to deal solely in the accreditation activities.

Like some of the other US players, ANAB is a private non-profit organization, not a federal government entity. It's funding comes from accreditation fees it charges registrars, auditor certification programs and other licensing. The accreditation fees are heavy; registrars must pay an accreditation fee for each type of industry they provide certificates to (aerospace, medical devices, software, etc.) plus a small "accreditation mark" fee for each actual audit conducted. These fees are passed along to the ISO 9001 end user organization in the pricing of registration services, of course.

As a result, in many cases the registrar itself does not make much money on a contract with an ISO 9001 user company; a large portion goes to ANAB, and about $500 per day goes to the individual auditor, who is usually a contractor. In the end, the cost of registration services is greatly a result of ANAB fees.

ANAB conducts periodic audits of registrars against the requirements of ISO Guide 62. So, yes, the auditors do get audited.

The current state of ANAB's power is simple: in the US, ANAB is the primary accreditor of ISO 9001 registrars. Due to international agreements, US registrars are free to accredit to organizations outside of the US, such as Britain's UKAS, but ANAB remains the most visible and clearly the primary accreditor in the States. Furthermore, under international agreements, ANAB accreditation is now recognized worldwide, and is widely respected. ANAB's goal is to globalize, and because it is a competitive organization, it wishes to one day be the single largest international accreditor. In 2001, Robert H. King was named the new President of ANAB and given an expanded mandate: "worldwide acceptance and recognition of ANAB programs."

ANAB conducts periodic audits of registrars against the requirements of ISO Guide 62 and the IAF Guideline Document on Guide 62. It does this in two steps: first, if performs office audits that includes a review of the registration company's procedures and office practices, and then it performs "witness audits" of the registrar's auditors. The latter are performed by shadowing auditors on an actual audit of the registrar's client --- which

means a registrant organization could very well one day see ANAB witness auditors shadowing their registrar on an audit of their facility. (The registrars --- not registrants --- pay ANAB's fees and expenses during such an audit; of course, these are ultimately spread throughout the registrars fees to client companies.) So, yes --- the auditors do get audited.

ANAB also wields some mighty power over ISO 9001 registered companies. Under its rules, if a company refuses to allow ANAB auditors on site to witness a registrar, ANAB can "blacklist" that company, unilaterally withdraw its ISO 9001 registration. It then may notify the IAF of the activity, in an attempt to alert all registrars worldwide that the company should not be certified. In short, companies that refuse ANAB witness auditing of their registrars may lose their ISO 9001 registration – and never get it back.

ISO 9001 registered companies who refuse to allow ANAB to conduct witness audits of their registrars can lose their registration permanently, under an obscure ANAB "blacklist" rule.

For the registration company, things are just as serious. Significant nonconformances cited by ANAB can result in de-accreditation, which effectively kills a registration body's ability to perform work in the US. This is not unprecedented.

However, ANAB is grossly understaffed and struggling with maintaining quality surveillance over US registrars. In 2004, a RAB representative announced the organization's intention to increase surveillance auditing tenfold, something that was seen as implausible and unlikely by some registrars. By 2005, nothing of the sort had taken root. Registrars also balked at the notion that they would have to pay for the increase in auditing, and talk of defections to UKAS accreditation had been reported. Because ANAB is not a formal government body, and only holds a tenuous monopoly over accreditation services, such conflicts are inevitable. There is, after all, no law that requires a registrar to obtain ANAB accreditation.

RABQSA

In late 2004, RAB partnered with the Quality Society of Australasia, an organization similar to the US's ASQ. In 2005 that partnership was formalized as the two merged into one organization, called RABQSA. This makes RABQSA no longer a domestic US organization, but an international one.

RABQSA's two main activities are the development of training curricula for auditors, and auditor certification. This is different from registrar accreditation as auditor certification certifies the individual, not the registration company. RABQSA hopes to expand its services to other professions, and not just limit them to quality management system auditors.

RABQSA's powers are mostly self-assumed. One of its primary services (and sources of income) is the accreditation of course materials. A provider of ISO 9001 auditor training will typically have to follow RABQSA guidelines for the course. The problem is that RABQSA develops its own guidelines for course curriculum that are independent of anything from the standards developers, and not necessarily derived from standards. For example, when ISO 9001:2000 was released, RABQSA (then RAB) immediately developed its own requirements for "ISO 9001 Transition Training" courses, and then mandated that all RAB certified auditors must undergo the training or lose certification. Training course providers then developed training courses based on the RAB criteria, paying RAB substantial fees for course accreditation in the process. The result was the plethora of "RAB Approved ISO 9001 Transition Training" courses that seemed ubiquitous between 2001 and the end of 2003. There was a problem, though: the RABQSA course criteria was not based on anything developed or sanctioned by ISO, the IAF or TC176. In fact, the ISO standard for auditing quality systems – ISO 19011 – was not released until late 2002. As a result, many have laid the blame for poor interpretations of ISO 9001 by auditors at the feet of RABQSA.

Out of the gate, the change from RAB to RABQSA has failed to impress. Their first initiative was to revise the training programs and certifications previously developed by ANSI-RAB, and in doing so they included requirements for auditors to undergo "psychometric behavioral testing." This is a controversial method of testing designed to weed out individuals who may not have the personality for auditing. At press time, Oxebridge was warning registrars to avoid RABQSA programs, in that they may lead to litigation over discriminatory hiring practices.

It should be noted that no standard or regulation requires registrars or registrants to use RABQSA certified auditors or RABQSA accredited courses.

THE US TAG

Remember: ANSI is the official US representative body for ISO. A small "Technical Advisory Group" (TAG) within ANSI represents the United States on ISO's TC176. This is often called "the US TAG to TC176."

The US TAG may be the most influential delegation on TC176 (with the British equivalent probably placing a close second.) As a result, the individuals who sit on the US TAG have an incredible amount of say in what gets published in ISO 9001 --- and what does not.

Like so many of the other US organs, the US TAG is administered by ASQ. Individuals may apply to join the US TAG through the ASQ website, but nowhere is there a public listing of who sits on the TAG currently. It's Chairman, Jack West, is well known enough --- he's published many books on ISO 9001, and is probably the most well known speaker on the subject --- but little else is known of the TAG's composition.[11]

Worsening the problem is that so many authors, consultants and ISO 9001 "personalities" claim membership on the US TAG as a professional credential --- usually to gain credibility for their books, speeches or training courses --- but there is no way to confirm this. As it stands, any person can simply ***say*** they helped write ISO 9001 by being a member of the US TAG --- and therefore gain instant credibility --- and nothing can be done about it.

The TAG meets periodically throughout the year to develop the ideas and text that will eventually go into the ISO 9001 standard. It then votes, alongside the other nation's similar committees, as to whether to accept a draft of the standard or not.

All American user organizations – those currently registered to ISO 9001 and those not registered but using the standard as a management tool – are urged to seek membership on the US TAG. Ensuring that the TAG adequately represent the demographic makeup of the ISO 9001 user pool is critical to the value of the content of the standard. Leaving the standard's development in the hands of academics, consultants and registrars is not in the best interests of the most important customer for ISO 9001: your company.

WEBSITES

International:

- ISO: www.iso.org
- CASCO: http://tinyurl.com/3mwg6
- TC 176: www.tc176.org
- IAF: www.iaf.nu
- IAAR: www.iaar.org
- AGP: http://tinyurl.com/43lro

Quasi-International:

- RABQSA: www.rabqsa.com
- ASQ: www.asq.org

American

- ANSI: www.ansi.org
- ANAB: www.anab.org
- US TAG: http://standardsgroup.asq.org/groups/qm/index.html

An official application form for the US TAG can be found at the end of this document.

[11] *At press time, the author received a listing of the membership roster as part of his membership package to TC 176. There were 197 individuals on the committee. Most appear to be consultants.*

OTHER IMPORTANT BODIES

Remarkably, we have not presented all the organizations that have some impact on ISO 9001 or conduct some kind of related activities. Here is a list of other influential organizations and brief description of their roles.

DEVCO: Committee on Developing Countries. Sister organization to ISO's CASCO, primarily tasked with standardization efforts in developing countries.
www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/isostructure/DEVCO.html

EA: European Cooperation for Accreditation. An organization similar to IAF, but with its activities limited to accreditors operating within Europe. ANAB, for example, is not a member of EA, but is a member of IAF. Publishes guidance documents for accreditors in the same way IAF publishes its GD series. www.european-accreditation.org

IEC: International Electrotechnical Commission. A sister organization of ISO, the IEC publishes technical standards for electrical, electronic and related technologies. www.iec.ch

IFAN: International Federation of Standards Users. This organization represents the end users of ISO 9001, and lobbies ISO and TC 176 to ensure user needs are included in the standard itself, and in registration activities. www.ifan.org

ILAC: International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation. Organization dealing with accreditation and competency evaluation of testing labs. Has agreements with IAF and IEC. www.ilac.org

IPC: International Personnel Certification Association. Formerly known as IATCA, this organization is comprised of accredited personnel training and certification bodies, such as RABQSA. (Not to be confused with the circuit board industry standards developer IPC.) www.iatca.com

IQNET: International Certification Network. Consortium of accredited registrars which helps ensure that certificates from its member registrars are viewed as equally valid throughout the world. Maintains a database of IQNet registrar's certificates. www.iqnet-certification.com

IRCA: International Register of Certificated Auditors. An alternative to RABQSA, IRCA offers individual auditor training and certification. IRCA certification is as well received internationally as RABQSA certification. www.irca.org

QSU Publishing: Publisher of the registrar trade journal Quality Systems Update. QSUP also publishes data on ISO 9001 certifications in North America, and ranks registrars according to size. Publisher Paul Scicchitano sits on TC176 and the advisory board for the International Conference on ISO 9000. www.qsuonline.com

QuEST FORUM: Quality Excellence for Suppliers of Telecommunications. ASQ sub-organization responsible for development and deployment of the TL9000 standard for telecommunications companies. questforum.asq.org

SAE: Society of Automotive Engineers. Despite the name, SAE publishes the AS9100 series of standards for aerospace quality management systems. AS9100 content is based on ISO 9001. www.sae.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Paris is the Vice President of Operations for Oxebridge Quality Resources, Inc., and has been implementing ISO 9001 systems since 1988. He currently sits on the US Technical Advisory Group to TC 176, the ISO committee responsible for development of the ISO 9000 family of standards. He is a member of the International Federation of Standards Users (IFAN), the Society for Automotive Engineers (SAE) and was an ANAB accredited auditor from 1999 to 2005. He is on the Board of Advisors for International Management Systems, an ANAB-accredited registrar of quality systems.

Mr. Paris originally worked as a Quality Laboratory analyst for The Mearl Corporation (now Engelhard) where he worked on mica-based pigments, and as a chemical process engineer Pure Tech, Inc., developing high tech ceramic and exotic alloy materials for physical vapor deposition. In both companies Mr. Paris spearheaded ISO 9001 implementations, doing so in high-volume working environments that prohibited any production shutdowns or extensive management meetings.

Using methods drawn from those real-world practical experiences, Mr. Paris formed Oxebridge in 1999 and developed a "Rapid ISO 9001 Implementation Program" that emphasized the use of simple, intuitive solutions that did not rely on heavy documentation, and did not impact management performance or production performance.

Since that time, the Oxebridge "Rapid ISO" program has assisted numerous companies in achieving ISO 9001 registration in less than 40 days, with the development of custom, lean systems that limit unnecessary documentation and provide for swift improvement returns. Oxebridge boasts the highest success rate of its clients, with 100% achieving registration on their first attempt, and 100% maintaining that registration through years of surveillance.

Mr. Paris lives near Orlando, Florida.

APPLICATION FORM
US TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) TO ISO/TC176
ON QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The TAG is an active working body, and membership is not just a recognition of honor status! As a TAG member, your active personal involvement in TAG affairs is expected and participation will be monitored per the ANSI Procedures for US Participation in the International Standards Activities of the ISO. Among these activities are:

1. TASK GROUPS

   Active participation is required in at least one task group listed on the TAG organization chart. These task groups provide advice and guidance concerning US positions on the work of the ISO/TC176. Participation includes reviewing submitted documents or proposals and contributing new US proposals and working documents. Since task groups are only active until the assigned document becomes a published standard, it will be expected to keep abreast of new developments and participate in appropriate new task groups as they are created.

2. MEETINGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

   There are three domestic TAG meetings each year. If you apply for participating member status you (or your designated alternate*) are expected to attend a minimum of two consecutive meetings. Those applying for observer status, for a fee, will receive all documents circulated to the TAG.

   There is at least one overseas meeting of the ISO/TC176 year. There may also be additional trips depending on whether or not any of the subcommittees or working groups of TC176 determine a need for further meetings. Ability to travel overseas is helpful and desirable, however.

   Expenses for travel are the responsibility of the participants.

3. VOTING

   Participating members are expected to return TAG ballots prior to the indicated deadlines. If you do not feel qualified to comment on a particular document, or cannot devote the required time necessary for a thorough review, a vote of “abstain” is expected.

Considering the responsibilities of full members, please give an indication of your willingness to meet these aims by completing the form below.

Please return completed application to:

Erin Hogg, CQIA
Coordinator, Standards Development
ehogg@asq.org

All information must be submitted electronically.

*Only participating members representing companies, government agencies or organizations are allowed to have alternates according to ANSI procedure.

NAME: _____

EMPLOYER: _____

BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____
_____

BUSINESS PHONE: _____ HOME PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

IF REPRESENTING AN INTEREST OTHER THAN YOUR EMPLOYER, PLEASE INDICATE:
_____
(Please spell out acronyms)

NAME OF ALTERNATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____
(If different from the above address)

CATEGORIES:
The following are categories which assist the TAG Administrator in determining the balance of represented interests. Please indicate in the space provided, the appropriate category which best describes the interest you will be representing:

G - Government _____
C - Company _____
O - Trade/Professional Assn. _____
I - Individual (self-employed or retired) _____

MEMBER STATUS:

Please indicate in the space provided what level of membership you are seeking:

P - Participating full member _____

O - Observer member _____
(A $250.00 fee for **observer** status is charged to cover administrative costs. Make check payable to: "US TAG to ISO/TC176" and return with application)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1.A letter from someone within your company and/or organization authorized to nominate you to represent that company and/or organization on the committee. It should also include reasons why the company and/or organization wishes to participate directly in these activities. (If applicant is proposing to represent a trade/professional association and their company, include a letter from both to avoid a possible conflict of interest.)

2. Include a copy of your resume as an attachment to this application.

_____

I recognize it is important that the TAG maintain a balance of interests within its full members so there will be no undue influence by specialized groups. Therefore, I am willing to consider becoming an observer. If such a situation arises, the administrator will inform me first.

Signature: _____