

Oxebridge Quality Resources, Inc.

How to
Legally
Publicize Your ISO 9001
Certification

First Edition

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CONGRATULATIONS, YOU'RE CERTIFIED.

NOW DON'T GET SUED.

The audits are complete, the champagne bottles are empty and the company party is long over. You've just gotten your company ISO 9001 certified, and are ready to tell the world.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. There are some pretty strict rules that govern how to publicize your new ISO 9001 certification (or "registration"), and a misstep can cause more than a few headaches. To make matters worse, there's no single guide on how to proceed properly.

Until now, of course. This Oxebridge guide aims to explain, in simple English, how to publicize your ISO 9001 certification in ways that meet all the various legal requirements of ISO, your registrar, your registrar's accreditation body, and even your country's domestic trade regulations.

The fact is, without proper guidance, you could accidentally expose your company to nuisance litigation on the basis of copyright or trademark infringement, violation of trade rules, or deceptive marketing practices.

NOTE: This guide applies as much to sector specific standards, such as AS9100 and ISO/TS16949, as well as ISO 9001. It also applies equally well to other standards such as ISO 14001.

FIRST, DO NOTHING.

After a typical (successful) registration audit, the registrar's Lead Auditor will inform your company that you have "been recommended for certification." Sometimes this confuses company management. "What do you mean, 'recommended?' Where's my certificate?"

The fact is that in order for the audit process to be valid, registration auditors can only come verify your compliance to the standard and then "recommend" your company for certification after the audit. ***The auditors themselves do not certify you... their home office does.*** In order to preclude problems associated with poor auditing, or (worse yet) outright auditor misconduct or fraud, the audit team's audit report must be reviewed and assessed by a higher authority within the registration company. The review consists of a thorough reading of the audit report to confirm that:

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- Adequate objective evidence has been recorded
- Findings are properly identified and defined
- The scope of the audit was in accordance with all requirements
- The auditors actually showed up and performed the audit

This last bullet is important, as it attempts to prevent any situations where an accredited registrar's Lead Auditor puts together a phony audit report in exchange for cash or other favors. It helps eliminate corruption and provide validity to the ISO 9001 certificate worldwide.

(By the way, these post-audit activities aren't voluntary for the registrar. Any accredited registration body **must** perform these duties in accordance with the rules required of them in order to maintain accreditation. You should raise suspicions on any registration organization that **does not** do a post-audit check.)

As a result, when the auditors leave, you are only "recommended" for certification. A typical registration company takes between two to eight weeks to conduct its review of the audit report and send out the final certificate. **You cannot legally claim to be certified to ISO 9001 until you physically receive your certificate.**

Remember: you cannot legally claim to be certified to ISO 9001 until you have physically received your certificate!

However, during the waiting period, you can legally announce that your company "has been recommended for certification to ISO 9001 by [Registrar X], and is expecting to receive its certificate shortly." If you have customers waiting impatiently for an announcement of your certification, this kind of statement will usually placate them. You can even get such a statement from your registrar, in writing, if you ask.

There is the possibility that the reviewers within the registration company will reject the auditors' report and deny certification despite the Lead Auditor's recommendation. How often do audit reports get rejected? **Rarely**. This means that if your registrar is a credible, accredited organization (and most are) there is almost no chance that your audit report will be rejected and your certification delayed. Even if it is, unless there was foul play involved, the registrar will usually go out of its way to resolve the issue internally or send an auditor out to your company to qualify any problems. The registration company will typically pick up the tab for this, too.

In short, it's best to do nothing about your certification until you physically receive the certificate. Again: if you are in a hurry or under some pressure to make an announcement (perhaps there is a contract riding on your certification), then announce that you have been "recommended."



YOUR NEW WALLPAPER

Finally, the day arrives when a package comes that includes your shiny new ISO 9001 certificate. Now you can snap into full-on bragging mode.

And you should. Not only have you earned it, but being boisterous about one's ISO 9001 certification can make the company money. But like every other way to make money, there's a right way and a wrong way to publicize your certification.

Being boisterous about ISO 9001 certification can make the company money.

The first thing to do is review the certificate for accuracy. The certificate must have the exact address for each of the facilities covered by your quality system's scope. Legally, the certification only extends to the address(es) listed on the certificate. There are some exceptions for extremely large organizations with hundreds of sites, but this is rare; in such cases, discuss this with your registrar. Also, you needn't include the home addresses of your traveling salespeople or remote, "at large" service personnel.

Make sure the addresses are correct, including street abbreviations, spelling, etc. Check the name of your company, too. A quality management system certificate should give off the proper sense of quality, which means spelling errors should be corrected.

Check your scope of registration. This is extremely important, because this defines what has been audited and confirmed as compliant to ISO 9001. ***Any aspect of your company's products or services not indicated in the scope is technically not certified if it isn't included!*** Also, this information is included in the various databases that list certified companies, and thus becomes a potential set of search keywords for customers who may be seeking ISO 9001 certified companies in your industry. Be sure your scope is clearly worded, accurate to what your company does, but not so narrowly defined as to limit your scope restrictively.

If you add new products or services in the future, you may have to undergo additional auditing and expand the scope of your registration.

Some registrars use SIC codes on the certificate; these are industry codes that numerically define your scope of business. Other registrars use IAF codes, NACE codes, NAICS codes or a combination of them. You should be sure the right codes align with the text description of your scope; an error on industry code could lead to improper certification or a wrong listing in the various ISO 9001 databases.



Here's a handy list of websites that provide definitions of the various codes:

SIC Codes: <http://www.melissadata.com/Lookups/sic.asp>

IAF Codes: <http://www.rabnet.com/content/advisory/advis15.htm>

NACE Codes: http://www.eureka.org.il/eureka/docs/list_of_nace_codes.htm

NAICS Codes: <http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html>

THE ACCREDITATION MARK

Your certificate will also include two otherwise obscure details that you should be concerned with: the registrar's accreditation body and scope of accreditation of your registrar. An unaccredited registration company should be avoided, as they are not subject to the rules that govern ISO 9001 registration and auditing, and as a result the validity of their certification is either suspect or unverifiable.

Your registrar will have its own logo on the certificate, of course, but next to it (or somewhere near by) should be the logo of the accreditation body that accredits that registrar. In the US, the primary accreditation body is ANSI-RAB. As a result, you may see the leftmost logo on your certificate:



As you can see, the letters "QMS" are included in the ANSI-RAB logo; this shows that the registrar is accredited to perform Quality Management System audits (to ISO 9001.) For registrars accredited to conduct ISO 14001 audits, you will see the letters "EMS."

Obviously, different international accreditation bodies (other than ANSI-RAB) will have different logos. The logos to the right of ANSI-RAB's are UKAS and RvA. Each has a different design scheme. The scope of accreditation under RvA can be traced through a certificate number placed below the logo.

Remember: these are not the logos of your registrar, but the accreditation bodies that govern them!

Verifying the presence of an "accreditation mark" is critical, because without it your certificate is unaccredited. That could mean the difference between it being recognized by your customers or not; and competitors can latch onto the fact that your certificate is unaccredited as a way to *discredit* you.



Some registrars are not accredited for a given industry --- say, aerospace --- and provide only a “letter of compliance” to a given standard (such as AS9100) while providing an accredited certificate to ISO 9001. In fact, a letter of compliance may look exactly like a certificate, although it will lack the accreditation mark. If you receive multiple certificates, make sure each one bears an accreditation mark. If not, make sure accreditation is not critical for the other standards. (Accreditation is not yet available for some standards, such as AS9120.) And be sure you have received accredited certificates if that is what you’ve paid for!

If you have any problems with your certificate, simply notify your registrar and request a correction. You should do this as soon as possible, so that the certificate can be corrected before it is filed with any ISO 9001 database or before you send it to any customers.

Registrars will gladly resolve any issues; just be sure to tell them you need the change as quick as possible.

TIME TO PUBLISH

Once you are confident that your certificate is accurate, scan it so you have an electronic copy ready to use in documents, websites or emails. It’s important to do this before your physical copy gets too man-handled.

Next, it’s a good idea to protect the certificate with a plastic sheet protector or lamination. You don’t want all your hard work reduced to a shabby, finger-smudged scrap of paper.

Here are some ideas on where to put copies of your certificate, for maximum effect:

- Framed, in the company lobby
- Laminated and hung throughout the company. (Keep track of where copies are posted, so you can update them when you get new certificates every three years.)
- Blown up and hung on trade show booths
- Posted on the company website
- Included in company publications and proposals
- Included in responses to RFQ’s or quality surveys submitted by prospective customers
- Reprinted in ads placed in industry magazines

Most companies will want to include an “ISO blurb” somewhere on the company letterhead or business cards. This is where it gets tricky.

The use of the certificate is somewhat limited, though, due to its size. In addition to the above suggestions, you will want to develop two additional mechanisms:



- A text-only blurb for use in ad copy or literature with limited space
- A graphic that includes the text blurb and registrar logo

We'll explain legal and proper ways to develop both of these, but first let's look at some overall rules or promoting your certification.

THE RULES

When your company gets its ISO 9001 certificate, the registrar has confirmed that your Quality Management System complies with ISO 9001. That's it. You are not allowed to read anything else into that statement, or extend it to anything else. For example:

- You cannot claim certification of product or service.
- You cannot claim certification of the company as a whole
- You cannot claim certification of a building or location
- You cannot claim certification of people
- You cannot claim certification of a document (such as your Quality Manual)

Again: ***your management system is certified***... nothing else.

And any use of the phrase "ISO 9001 certified" that does not fit this rule is misleading, and could lead to problems. Furthermore, improperly using the statement with a copy of your registrar's logo --- or ISO's logo --- could land you in an infringement lawsuit.

When creating your blurb, you basically have two methods: a text-only statement, and/or a reproduction of your registrar's logo. (You may elect to use both methods, each in different situations.) Here we go into the rules behind both scenarios.

A FEW WORDS ARE WORTH 1,000 PICTURES

Text-only blurbs are good for putting on document headers or footers, within articles or press releases, or other places where graphics may not work. For the text-only option, you have to be very specific as to the language you use. These are commonly accepted phrases:

- "ISO 9001:2000 Certified Management System"
- "ISO 9001 Certified Quality System"
- "ISO 9001 Registered Quality Management System"
- "Manufactured under an ISO 9001 certified management system"



You get the picture; various permutations on the above examples are possible.



It is a personal choice whether to include the revision suffix “:2000” in your blurb. This sends a message that your company knows what it’s talking about when it comes to ISO 9001, and you can therefore be specific as to what revision you are certified to, but does create problems later on if the current revision of ISO 9001 changes --- which it inevitably will. A rule of thumb is to only use the “:2000” suffix in documents that change frequently, and can easily be updated. For signs or other semi-permanent taglines, leave out the suffix so you don’t have to reprint them when ISO 9001:2006 comes out. Failing to update a text-only statement that includes an out-of-date revision suffix will make your company look as if it’s either (a) clueless, or (b) no longer certified.

Also, be specific about *what* is certified; again, this is your “management system” (or “quality management system.”)

By the way, despite some hoopla to the contrary, the terms “registered” and “certified” are roughly interchangeable. Technically speaking, once you are blessed by a registrar, you are simultaneously *both* registered and certified. “Registration” means your company has been entered into an official registry of ISO 9001 companies. Such registries include World Preferred (worldpreferred.com), Who’s Registered (whosregistered.com), and the ISO 9001 database at Quality Digest (qualitydigest.com). Your company is also entered into the client registry of your particular registrar.

“Certification” means you have received an official certificate which provides evidence of your conformity.

Here are a few examples of what you CANNOT say in a text-only blurb:

- “ISO Certified Management System”
- “ISO 9001 Certified Company”
- “ISO 9001 Certified Products”
- “ISO Certified Products”
- “ISO 9001:2000 Certified Facility”
- “This Product Manufactured to ISO 9001 Specifications”



These examples are disallowed because they imply, or outright state, that the product, facility or company is ISO 9001 certified. In some of the above cases, the “9001” was left out altogether, leaving the impression that the company is “ISO certified.” Remember this: ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) doesn’t certify anything. It merely publishes the standards. *There’s no such thing as “ISO certification!”*

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In fact, making the erroneous claim of “ISO Certified” or “ISO Registered” can get you into hot water with ISO itself, an organization that



aggressively protects its trademark and copyright.

You should also watch out for typos or poor phrasing that can make your company look ridiculous. A common mistake is citing “ISO 2000 Certification” (no such thing) or ISO 90001 (an extra zero.)

Keep in mind as well that currently companies are only certified to ISO 9001, not ISO 9000. The latter is used either as a generic term for the family of ISO 9001-related standards, or a specific reference to the glossary document *ISO 9000:2000 Quality Management Systems – Fundamentals and Vocabulary*. **You must indicate 9001 in your text blurb!** (Remember, 9002 and 9003 have been discontinued. Any reference to these older standards is now obsolete.)

If using a text-only blurb on your company website, consider making the blurb a link to the scanned image of your full certificate. The unfortunate reality is that any company can say they are “ISO 9001 Certified.” Linking to a real, current and accredited certificate shows your company means business, and is honest and reputable. Remarkably, Oxebridge has discovered ISO 9000 consultants illegally claiming to be “ISO 9001 Registered” when they were not!

(If you’re a real bloodhound, consider challenging competitors who claim to be ISO 9001 certified and which don’t provide evidence. In the United States, intentionally claiming to be ISO 9001 registered when your company is not is a violation of Federal Trade Commission rules against deceptive trade practices and false advertising. Countries outside of the US have similar laws and agencies.)

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LOGOS A GO-GO

When using a graphic with your blurb, more rules come into play. The best and universally accepted method is to use the art provided to you by your registrar. Registrars will send along “camera ready art” (usually as photostat hardcopies or softcopy bitmap graphics) with your certificate. Good registrars even provide lengthy rules on the acceptable use of their graphics.

Using a registrar-provided graphic ensures you are following the rules, but you must be careful not to violate either the registrar’s or the accreditor’s trademark in the process.



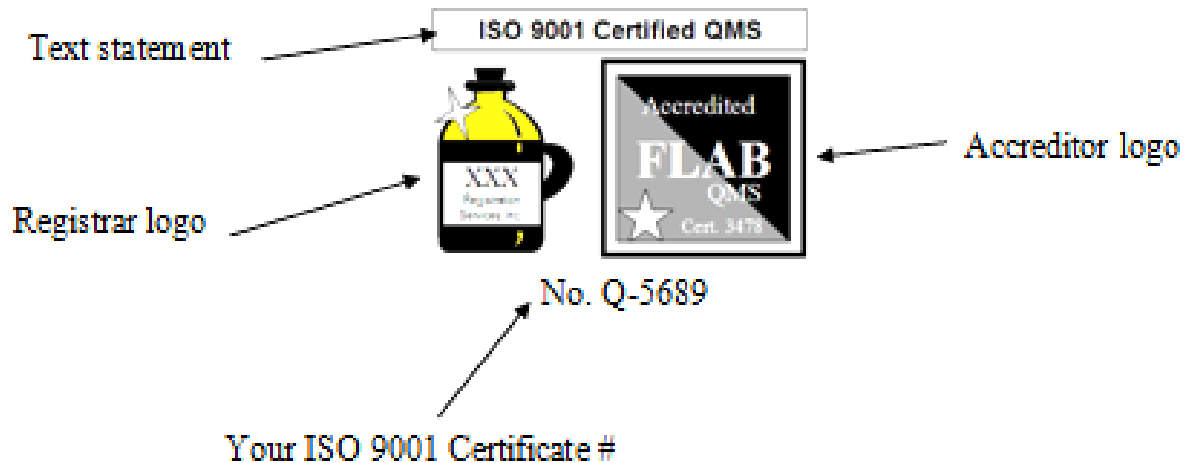
Here is an example of artwork provided by a fictional registrar, XXX Registration Services, Inc.; let us pretend that XXX is accredited by Fictional Laboratory Accreditation Board (FLAB).



The requirement is that you *must use the two logos together*, as given to you by the registrar. You are not allowed to split them up and use either one individually. Doing so not only weakens the validity of your claim of certification, but also risks infringement because registrars only grant you permission to use their logo in conjunction with the accreditation mark.

Your registrar may also have additional rules for use of their mark, such as how the image may be re-sized or colored. A safe rule of thumb is that reducing the image is allowed, provided the aspect ratio (width: height) is maintained, and that the text is legible. *Increasing* the graphic's size may not be allowed at all.

In summary, the absolute best way to publicize your ISO 9001 certification is to follow this model:



Again, if you use this type of graphic on your website, have it link to a copy of your actual certificate.



BUT...

The finished text blurb and/or graphic set should be the only versions you use on literature, etc. Be sure not to let your excited salespeople or copywriters start making their own variations of it.

Also, there are rules as to where you can put these indicators. Remember, your Quality System is registered, not your product. As a result, ***you cannot put the artwork or text directly on any product, or use it in any way that infers the product is certified.***

The rule of thumb is that product must be separated by at least two layers of packaging before an ISO 9001 sticker or announcement of certification is attached to it. For example, you can put your graphic on a box, provided that the item is then packaged with another two layers of separating material (shrink wrap, packing peanuts, etc.) This is a rule of thumb, however, and not a law. It's just a great and accepted way to avoid any problems.

If your blurb or graphic includes the specific phrase “manufactured under an ISO 9001 registered quality system,” you have a bit more latitude. But placing it directly on the product is frowned upon.

(One notable exception is carton manufacturers, who regularly imprint their goods --- boxes and cartons --- with a stamp of some sort. Because their goods are packaging materials, they are given a bit more leeway than other companies.)

You also have to be very careful that where you place your text or graphic set is specific to the addresses included in your scope, and does not appear on anything with an address outside of your scope. If, for example, you put an “ISO 9001 Registered” stamp on letterhead that includes an address for a plant that is not part of the scope of your registration, this is a violation that can be reported and acted upon. Likewise for flyers, brochures and websites that include various addresses not included on your certificate.

In such cases, you are legally required to be specific as to which facilities are included in the scope of certification. If your letterhead includes addresses for three facilities, let's say one in each of TX, FL and OH, you must be clear as to what is certified by modifying your text blurb as follows: “ISO 9001 Certified QMS (FL and OH only).”

This rule applies equally to what products or services are included in your scope of registration. You cannot put “ISO 9001 Registered” on literature that includes products or services not covered under your certificate. In such cases, a specific text blurb can define the scope; say, for example, your company manufactures X-widgets and Z-

You cannot put the artwork or text directly on any product, or use it in any way that infers the product is certified.



widgets, but only the X-Widget plant is certified. Your blurb should read “ISO 9001 Certified QMS (Design & Manufacture of X-Widgets Only.)”

FREE ADVERTISING... THE BEST KIND

There are some free ways to publicize your new ISO 9001 certification. Trade magazines for your specific industry will generally treat submission of such an announcement as a press release, and run it for free in their “Latest Industry News” section. If you consider the cost of running an ad in such a magazine, getting free coverage in their news section is a pretty good deal. Just be sure to write your announcement in press release fashion, and not like blatant ad copy.

Consider sending a press release around to customers, too. It can’t hurt.

Ask your registrar if they will run the press release on their website. Be sure to ask for them to run the whole press release, not just a one-line entry on their “List of Clients” page. If you write the copy for them, the registration company will usually be glad to comply.

If you’re an Oxebridge client, be sure to send a press release our way, too. Our website is one of the most highly trafficked ISO 9001 related websites, and our news page is read daily by many potential customers.

Send that press release along to the local newspaper, too. Such papers are usually starved for industry-related news, so in some cases such an article may even get escalated to a full-blown, reporter-written, front page news piece. Emphasize the impact that ISO 9001 certification will have on retaining and creating jobs, and you will hit the required nerve for newspaper coverage.



Notes and Addenda

The logos and trademarks are the exclusive property of the organizations included herein, and are © and ™ their respective owners. Inclusion in this guidance document is not to be taken as an endorsement by the organization of Oxebridge, or vice-versa.

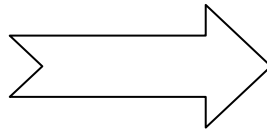
At press time, the ANSI-RAB organization was undergoing changes that will see it split into two separate organizations. These are RABQSA, which does training and certification of individual auditors, and ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (or ANAB), the new registrar accreditation body.

You do not need to concern yourself with RABQSA within the context of this guide. It is pertinent only to the training and certification of individuals, not companies.

This means that if your registrar had been accredited by ANSI-RAB (now ANAB), your certificate may include one of either of the following logos, depending on the age of the certificate. The two logos are equivalent:



Old Logo



New Logo



About the Author

Christopher Paris is founder of Oxebridge Quality Resources, Inc., and has been implementing ISO 9001 systems since 1988.

Mr. Paris originally worked as a chemical process engineer for The Mearl Corporation (now Engelhard) where he worked on mica-based pigments, and 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.

Mr. Paris’ articles on ISO 9001 have been translated into numerous languages throughout the world, and praised for their simplicity and clarity. He lives near Orlando, Florida, and may be reached at cparis@oxebridge.com.



About Oxebridge Quality Resources

Oxebridge Quality Resources, Inc. was founded in 1999 with the intent of providing companies in all sectors affordable, practical implementations of ISO 9001 and related quality system programs. 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.

Using the same common-sense approaches as in its ISO 9001 implementation services, Oxebridge has become a leader in the implementation of other systems, including AS9100, the aerospace quality system standard.

For more information on Oxebridge, as well as other articles on ISO 9001 implementation methods, visit the company’s website at www.Oxebridge.com.

