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MANAGEMENT SERVICES

ISO

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**Preparation
for assessment
and the value
of audits**

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ISO - PREPARATION FOR ASSESSMENT AND THE VALUE OF AUDITS

By Status Management Services Ltd
- The UK ISO Standards Survey
Summer 2024

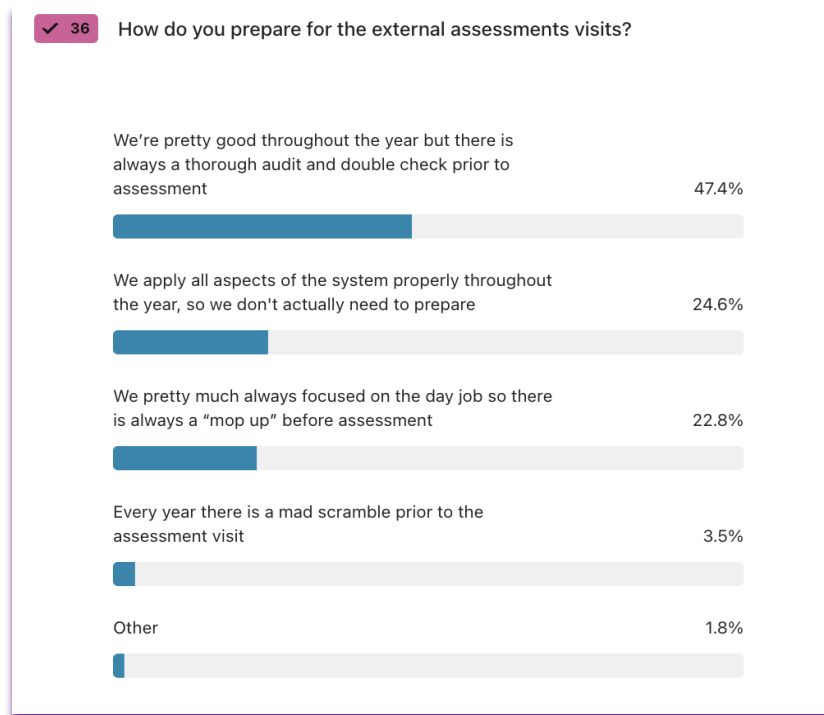
PRIMARY FINDING

It is nice to see it that, for most ISO registered companies, preparation for external assessments is more of a review and tidy-up than some pre-assessment mad scramble.

The largest group (47%) are typical of what Status find in practise “We’re pretty good throughout the year, but there is always an audit and double check prior to the external assessment.”

Then, almost equal in size, there are two very contrasting approaches the way in which the systems are managed.:

1. ISO is properly applied and integrated into the day-to-day activities and there is therefore very little need to prepare for an audit (report 24.6% of respondents).
2. The focus is on “the day job” and therefore there is always a review before the external assessment (report 22.8% of respondents).



As with any survey, there are always likely to be outliers, but it is good to see there are only 3.5% that report that there is always a mad scramble prior to the external assessment.

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When Statius are working with clients, they [have advised] they tend to work with the aim of having ISO fully integrated with the business processes and practices as they find this approach delivers best benefit.

In short, Statius are pragmatists, realistic, and know that is often a need to prepare for external assessments. However, this pre audit approach also provides a good time to critically review processes and activities with a view to nudging those little ongoing improvements.

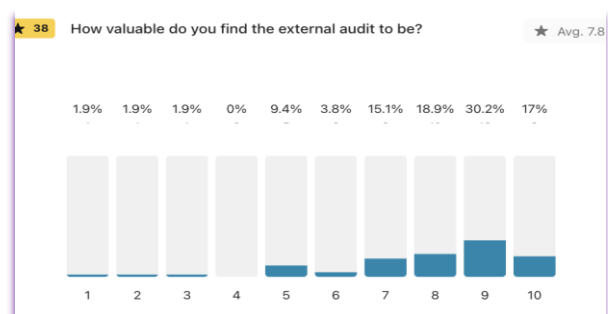
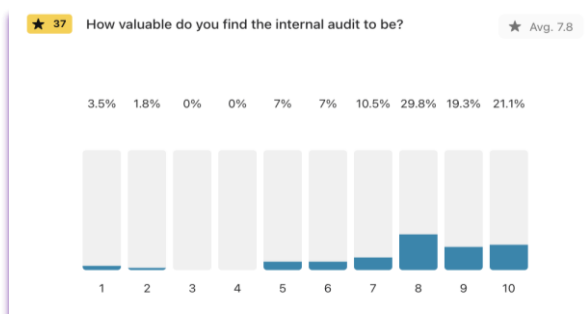
THE DETAIL

In reality, the full title for this paper should probably really be “ISO - Preparation for assessment and the value of audits, nonconformance and management review”, but that was really long, so we should shortened it to focus on assessment and audits; but we actually going to go a little deeper.

Unsurprisingly, the survey found that, those companies that focus solely on the business, perhaps seeing ISO as separate to it, usually have more challenges with audits and non-conformance. They don't seem to be seeing, and are certainly not embracing, the potential benefits of the systems.

Interestingly, the survey also finds that those companies that diligently apply all aspects of ISO throughout the year and therefore need little audit “preparation” are twice as likely to use a combination of both internal and external (consultancy) resources. So, it would also appear that this external view also helps drive improvement and keeps the business moving forward.

In reviewing the charts below, and the value ascribed to the audits, it would seem that most companies find very similar value in terms of both their internal and external audit processes.

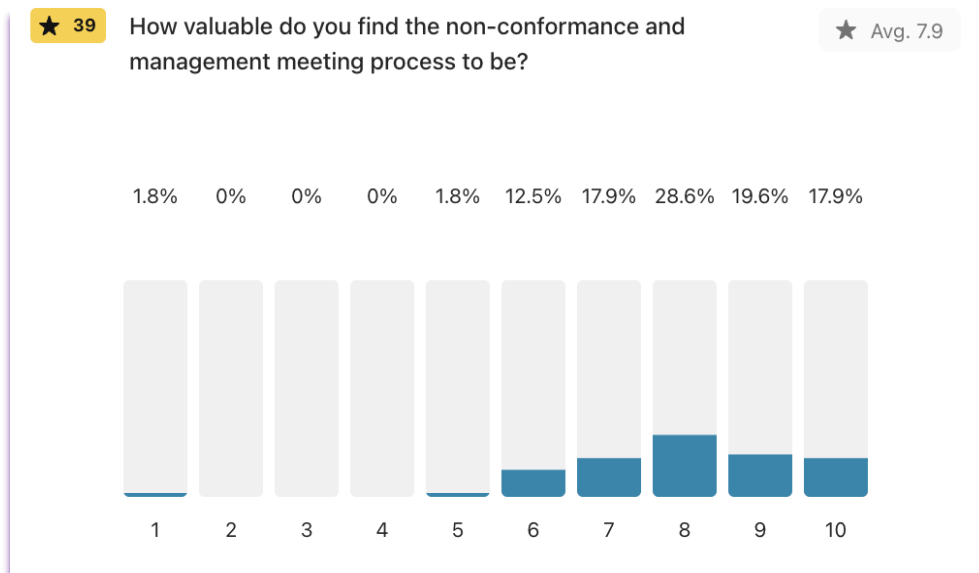


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This is confirmed by various comments made by respondents as part of their responses, for instance:

- *“The company has raised its standards and targets to align with ISO standards, each audit provides us with new challenges and ways to improve.”*
- *“Audits were always difficult, but over the past year, and after a lot of teamwork, we now have a good robust system in place and our audits this year were a breeze for once!”*

As can be seen from the chart below, a similar high degree of satisfaction is found with the value gained from the way in which companies manage their non-conformance and management meeting processes.



Again, quotes from the respondents themselves might be useful at this point:

- *It [the non-conformance process] allows you to pinpoint where some of the issues are and rectify them in a systematic way. It is all evidence based too, so the facts are always quantified.*
- *Non-conformance is a good indicator of a gap you may have within the system and can be used as way to get a buy-in for change at a higher management level.*
- *These meetings give us chance to complete the review of any actions taken and identify further actions. They also allow feedback from and to the rest of the team.*
- *[These processes] ensure we are kept on our toes and update systems & processes when any gaps are identified*

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- *“It is helping with consistency through the teams and having a defined process to work by. It [the audit and non-conformance processes] also gives us tools for capturing failings and developing solutions.”*

However, the ideal approach is probably best crystalised in the comment made by the following respondent:

- *[Get] “...buy in across the company, automate the non-conformance process, make it rapid and fast acting, spread the culture further so that it [ISO] is a help not a hindrance...”*

THE SURVEY BACKGROUND

The survey, and the associated analysis, was undertaken and validated by [Dr Edward Nugent](#) and [Kajsa Nordström](#) of [Digital Scorecard](#) to ensure an unbiased and independent view.

The analysis is based on a survey of UK SME's and businesses and was undertaken over the spring and summer of 2024. All data was anonymised as part of the research. The results from the study are not meant to represent all UK SMEs but due to the sample size it is believed to provide a realistic picture of UK SMEs and their thoughts about ISO registration.

To learn more about the survey and to access other papers please go to:

<https://www.isoconsultantsuk.co.uk/ISO-survey-2024>.

ABOUT STATIUS

Our mission is to help ambitious owners and managers become great leaders. We want to help them help their people deliver:

- Better strategies
- Better systems (the ISO bit)
- Better measurement (the KPI bit)
- Engaged people delivering
- Better results... the interesting bit

Our team of consultants have expertise in implementing, supporting and developing a variety of ISO standards across multiple sectors. All consultants will have gained "hands on" operational experience in a variety of fields before becoming consultants, including engineering, manufacturing, retail, warehousing, and logistics, to name just a few.

The consultants hold a selection of qualifications including degrees and master's degrees, the NEBOSH General Certificate, the Institute of Leadership and Management Award, the NEBOSH Fire Safety, the EOR/202N Work Safely in an Engineering Environment – Basic Lift Safety Certificate, IOSH, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), DSE Assessor, and (of course) specific ISO auditor qualifications.

The company is itself registered to ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001 by [ForeFront Certification](#) a [UKAS](#) approved certification body. The company also hold [Investors In People](#) Accreditation and is a member of the [British Quality Foundation](#) and [The Good Business Charter](#).

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Checkout www.status.co.uk for more details.

Papers from this study

1. ISO - Why companies register
2. ISO - The benefits
3. ISO - The impact on sales and contracts
4. ISO - The pleasure and **PAIN** of maintaining standards
5. ISO - Preparation for assessment and the value of audits