

RA Case Study 1

Develop an ISO 9000:2000 Quality Management System in the Public Sector

1. Overall Description

The Branch had recently been reorganized, leaving the Divisions with challenges on workflow, accountability and professional responsibility. Real Alternatives Inc. (RA) assisted the client to evaluate and address these challenges through a two-phased approach.

Phase I evaluated the processes and procedures, the organization and its environment. The deliverable from Phase I was a detailed proposal for Phase II, outlining an approach and methodology to implement continuous process improvement, to better serve their customers, consistent with the ISO 9000:2000 quality management standard.

The team included four RA Associates and nine client staff, all of whom were actively engaged in the project. This project facilitated the formation and development of a new team within the Division. The project reviewed existing work processes and organization structure, evaluated their effectiveness against ISO 9000:2000, identified gaps, then supervised the creation and documentation of a quality management system modelled after ISO 9000:2000.

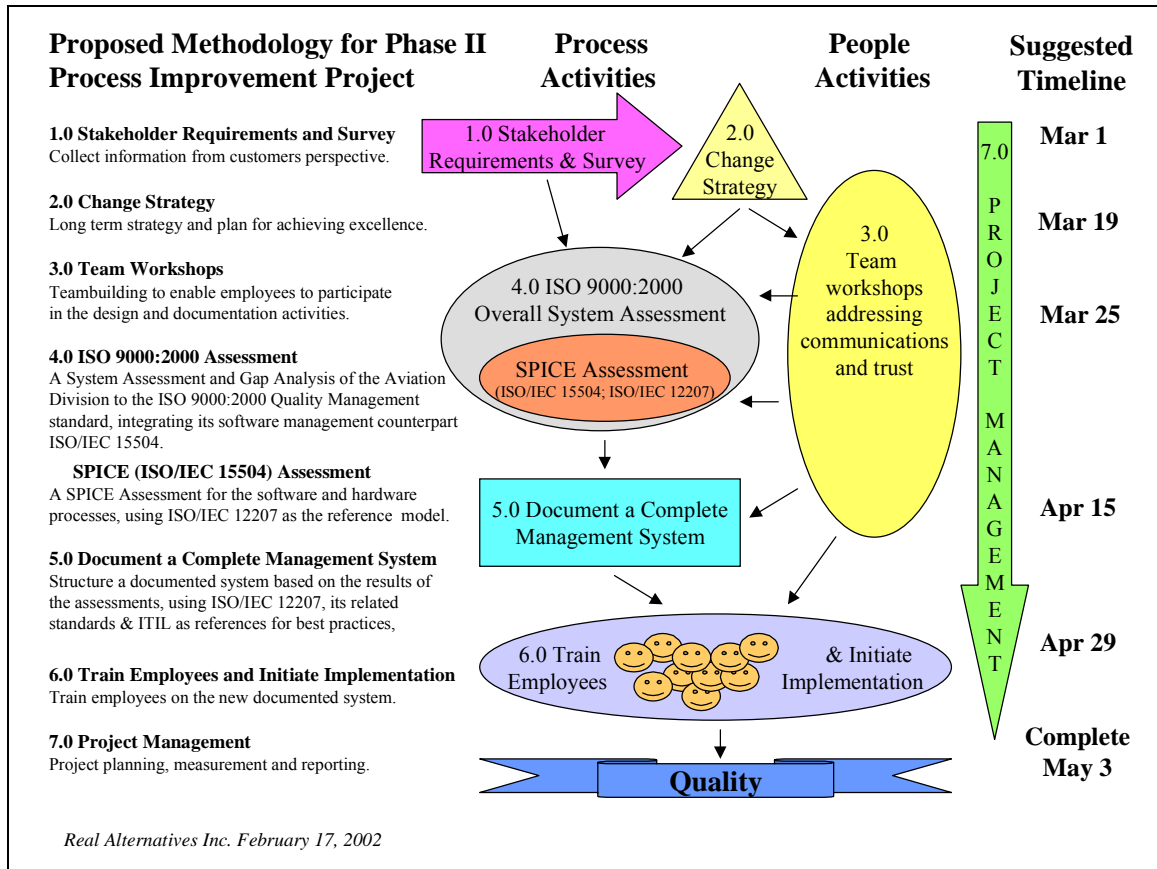
The stakeholder group was National in scope, including all the Regional stations and all support groups for the regional stations. As well, stakeholders included an Industrial Sector and the Public. The element of risk was extremely high because the business processes being evaluated have a direct effect on aircraft safety. The project was completed in six months, from December 2001 to May 2002, for a total value of \$100,000.

1. RA Approach Used – The Activities

In consultation with the client, the following activities were taken to complete the project with outstanding results.

1. **Setting the Framework:** The Division had just undergone an organization change and the team members were not sure about their new roles and responsibilities. There was a feeling that process documentation was required.

In Phase I of this project, the RA Project Manager (PM) interviewed the Manager and each of the team members. The purpose of Phase I was to evaluate the extent of process design and documentation required. The client felt that there was a need to document the processes to the level of ISO 9000 and was looking for validation on that proposed change. The RA PM conducted an evaluation and recommended that the Division undergo process design and documentation to the level of ISO 9000:2000 with SPICE to cover the software component of the process. The RA PM also pointed out the importance of the people part of the project and recommended some team building efforts to create the appropriate environment for change. These additional components, represented in the following figure, were presented to senior management and approved.



The RA PM met with the senior management of this Division, prior to Phase II, to understand the strategic direction and their specific needs. The meeting allowed the RA PM to explain the project in more detail, which helped with “buy-in” and commitment to the process.

2. Evaluating the Processes:

To kick-off Phase II of the project, the senior managers were invited to attend the Stakeholder Requirements and Survey session, which was an effective course of action to get them involved. During the Stakeholder session, requirements were articulated, the performance of the Division was evaluated and a course of action was determined. RA also assisted the teams to design implementation plans for these improvement initiatives. This change initiative established a team environment and documented the Stakeholder Requirements to establish a firm foundation.

- Acting on the Evaluation Results:** RA Associates worked with the Division staff to document all core and enabling processes, some of which were existing, and some which were developed using this ISO 9000:2000 standard as the Framework, and adjusting the steps as required. As well, RA Associates assisted the Division to build working relationships between each other and with their stakeholders.

Records of the new processes and documented procedures were maintained by the consultants and handed over to the staff during transition. These were shared with the Stakeholders at a workshop, for review by the Stakeholder organizations. One of the ways to monitor progress that was introduced to the team was the process for Management Reviews. RA Associates developed the Management Review process for the Division and assisted in the facilitation of the first Management Review meeting.

4. **Project Management Activities:** Throughout the project, there was constant communications with the client, either through the RA PM or the Associates on site at the time. At all times, the RA PM was aware of the progress of the project, compared to plan, and communicated any deviation from plan to the Manager. Every two weeks, the RA PM prepared a status report for the Manager, which was shared with the consulting team. The Manager and the RA team used it to monitor the project. It included:
- effort to date, compared to plan,
 - progress of the change,
 - risk factors that are threatening the success of the project, and
 - issues that have occurred, with a realistic plan for resolution.

RA's proposed detailed project schedule provided the co-ordination tool for the project. It was validated and it remained on track, completed on time and within budget.

2. **Facilitative Approach:**

Facilitation and guidance was provided by RA, through coaching and mentoring the project team:

- Develop ground rules with the team which describe desired behaviours
- Develop shared values with the team
- Establish credibility by “walking the talk” and treating others in a respectful and empowering way
- Have an open door to the project leader and team members and be available yourself for 2-way communications on a scheduled and ad-hoc basis
- When there is a need to provide feedback, ask for permission and approach the person with empathy

The RA PM provided coaching to both the project leader and some of the key team members. Throughout the project, the RA Associates acted professionally in the way they interacted with the team members. The project leader referred to it as “nothing less than outstanding”. RA has developed a reputation for effectively addressing and resolving issues in a people-oriented way.

3. **Sensitivities and Challenges:**

RA utilizes prevention techniques and risk management in all of our projects to minimize issues and reduce sensitivities. The RA PM led the consulting team to identify and assess the risks to project success, through a brainstorming session that revealed some interpersonal and management buy-in issues that could challenge success. The RA PM brought one particular

concern forward to the client, who was very aware of the situation, and assured the consulting team that the situation would be dealt with prior to the start of the project. It was, and the project proceeded as planned.

On this project, the RA PM demonstrated risk management behaviours to ensure project success. As a mentor and coach, the RA PM modelled how to develop a risk management culture, conscious of the need to identify, quantify, prioritize and implement contingency plans for risk elements that threaten project success. At each status update meeting with the client, the RA PM opened discussion with the client to identify potential risks to successful completion of the project.

There are often issues, however. This was a newly formed team, from two competing groups, with severe historical personnel issues. The challenge was to establish trust and credibility in order to create buy-in and solicit participation, which was required for successful completion of the project. There was an issue about the organization structure and one group in particular was faced with the decision of either having a supervisor or operating as a self-managed team. The RA PM investigated the implications of these structures with regard to the engineering responsibilities, with PEO, Professional Engineers of Ontario, and presented the results to the team members. It was decided that the group would operate with a supervisor.

As well, RA Associates are very open to feedback and frequently use a tool called “Plus/Delta”, asking what is going well (+) and what can be improved (Δ).

4. The Results:

RA assisted the client to understand their role, validate their structure and develop reporting relationships between each other and with their key stakeholders. The project was completed successfully, on time and within budget. At the final closing feedback session with the manager, he praised the RA team for the quality of the work and the approach that we took with his team, which was “nothing less than outstanding”. He also wrote in his reference letter, “I feel that we have collectively laid the foundation for an effective working process. The ball is now in our court to build on those processes and develop the necessary enabling procedures that will help bring them to life.”