

Quality matters: audits as a learning platform

Quality audits are a requirement of ISO certification, and are performed to verify that standards are being conformed to by reviewing objective evidence. Tecan has introduced an internal training program for quality auditors, helping to maintain the Company's high quality standards and customer satisfaction.

The word audit comes from the Latin audiō, which means 'to hear or listen'. An audit is a useful, hands-on management tool which helps companies and organizations to continuously improve their performance and achieve greater customer satisfaction. The international standard for auditing quality and environmental management systems within a company is clearly defined in ISO 19011: 2002, providing a clear explanation of the guiding principles for management of audit programs and how to plan and conduct an audit, either internally or externally, as well as the skills, competencies and behaviours required for auditors. In addition, various government organizations – including the FDA (US), ANVISA (Brazil) and CMDCAS

(Canada) – require additional validation that ensures quality management systems are effective, adequately implemented and sufficiently documented.

Within Tecan, auditing is used as a vital tool to strengthen the Company's values and to create solid foundations from which to achieve its vision. Giuseppe Grignano, Global Compliance Validation Manager, explained: "To ensure the future success and security of our business, it is vital that we maintain and enhance our quality standards, and auditing is an important management tool for assessing our performance in this area. Learning is a lifetime exercise for both people and organizations and, for maximum benefit,

an audit should not only report on areas of concern and non-conformances, but also highlight areas of good practice, allowing us to learn from each other to improve our working practices and enhance our business."

"Companies usually send staff on external training courses to gain the required expertise and accreditation for quality auditing, but we have initiated an internal training program to maintain and continually improve the expertise of our auditors. Working with Bureau Veritas – a world leading independent company in conformity assessment and certification services – the Tecan Operational Excellence Team developed a course that explains the audit



Giuseppe Grignano and Giuseppe Simonetta

process and its benefits. This initiative brings together over 40 auditors from various areas of the business, including research and development, manufacturing engineering, procurement and quality, helping to expand and strengthen the skills of both new and existing auditors."

Run at sites in Switzerland, Austria and the USA, the two-day course uses a combination of classroom-based presentations and role playing exercises. Giuseppe continued: "Participants learn about the requirements of ISO 19011, the behavior expected by auditors when conducting audits and how to resolve the needs of conflicting interests through constructive discussion. At the end of the course there is an exam based on the ISO 19011 standard. This includes both theoretical situations and practical examples of current challenges, often yielding solutions that can subsequently be applied to the business. Exam papers are sent to Bureau Veritas for external verification and, on successful completion, Bureau Veritas awards a certificate of accreditation to participants."

Giuseppe Simonetta, Global Quality Manager, concluded: "As a company, we are continually working to improve our expertise in this area, improving the skills of our auditors and enabling them to act as leaders in their core competencies. This ensures we are able to fulfil the regulatory compliance needs of the market and, ultimately, secure the future of our business. This initiative will help us to improve operational efficiency and give our customers complete confidence in our auditing processes, because our auditors have been examined and approved, not by Tecan, but by an external, independent company."



Gerald Schmidt, Head of Sales – Europe, Near East, Middle East and Africa

Leading the Debate

Since moving to Tecan six months ago, I have soon come to realise that this Company thrives on an inspiring and stimulating business culture. From its strong base in Europe, Tecan is a truly global company in its thinking, working effectively at a local level and maintaining essential links with teams in the US and Asia Pacific. At the core of Tecan's vision is quality and reliability on a global scale; it is clearly a major life science business and has the competence, understanding and innovation to exceed the expectations of our customers in life science laboratories around the world. We are not just saying this, we really can do it.

Tecan has long been renowned for its engineering capabilities, however, I had completely underestimated the Company's real strength in life sciences. Within Tecan there is a huge breadth of international knowledge in all life science fields, from genomics to proteomics, cell biology to metabolomics, and most of the product management and application specialists are life science- not just engineering-based. This knowledge is used to transform time-consuming manual processes into state-of-the-art automated solutions for various ground-breaking technologies and sophisticated workflows. Applying these solutions provides a fast response to the demands of the market and that, for me, is really true innovation.

Email talk@tecan.com to tell us your experiences of Tecan's innovation in action.