Chapter VIII

Auditing Quality is Quality Auditing

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One of the objectives of a chapter or book title can be the subject, or it can unveil the opposite: the title is the subject of its own objectives, a title can also dance. Words, phrases, auditing and quality are dances, and trying to explain something as clear and simple as ‘Auditing Quality is Quality Auditing’ can be vague and difficult.

Quality of information will be described here from several absolute and relative points of views. These points of view should be considered first before starting a reengineering process like the ISO norms or TQM concepts. Described will be the IS Auditor’s role in this process. The process itself here is the one that should be executed before even thinking of ISO and TQM.

Besides those points of view to determine quality of information, an Information Systems Process Matrix is included in this chapter as a tool or guidance to distinguish organization and technical environments in defining the Information Systems Processes.

This chapter should make clear that quality systems are implemented according to good defined business and control objectives; it should make clear that the IS Auditor’s role in this process is required and that the IS Auditor can prevent implementations made for the wrong reasons.

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BACKGROUND

To improve internal processes, the ISO norms can be an excellent challenge to implement. Unfortunately, if you design your business processes and procedures poorly and you make sure that they also are in compliance with those badly designed components of your ISO quality system, you also get certified! Though even in that case the ISO norms can still add value to the organization, IS Auditors can prevent badly designed procedures and control objects. They should be aware that nowadays business objects, procedures, politics and control objectives are always related to Information Systems: Their dance floor...

Besides professional auditors there is a wide scale of other professionals, like managing directors, controllers, IT professionals, users, clients, etc., who absolutely do not agree with this chapter title. They are reading two completely different meanings and besides that, their definitions also differ from each other. Dancing in the jungle.

And that is exactly why this chapter wears this title; the instant protests of many people chasing their shadows. Quality is noontide where the shadows are vanished.

Internal or external auditors dealing in a quality system environment are for their function part of that quality system. If you are auditing quality, your audit itself should also have quality. Of course you can have quality audits in a not defined quality system environment. Those environments do not support ISO or TQM standards or concepts exactly but can be quality or best practice companies just as easily or sometimes they execute best practice because they excellently ignore these norms. A quality audit adds value to an environment and it exposes the quality, which has always been there a priori. They should realize that their recommendations, consults and proofs are resumes of poor quality or a lack of quality what can only mean that following up IS auditors recommendations bring the organization to its state of art: Quality. That is why IS auditors, among other auditors, actually always audit (poor or lack of) quality and therefore Auditing Quality is Quality Auditing, let’s dance.... IS auditors should be aware that there is always a priori quality in a company. They can contribute to exposing that and
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