

ACHIEVING YOUR ISO 14001 CERTIFICATION

by *Bernard Hall*

STEP 1

GETTING STARTED

In previous editions of *Private Hire News* we have explained what **ISO 14001** is and the reasons for achieving accredited certification. As a reminder: *ISO 14001 is the internationally recognized standard for 'Environmental Management Systems' and achieving certification provides proof positive of your environmental credentials.*

In this and future editions, we will offer advice – using our seven step strategy – in helping you to achieve this goal.

Management commitment

Environmental considerations, to mean anything, must be formulated in strategy and become part of the business culture. Business strategy can only come from the top and this means that *senior management must be able to prove that they are both committed and involved* in ensuring that plans are in place to meet their environmental improvement objectives and policies. Your organization is unlikely to achieve certification unless the boss can demonstrate his or her role in directing the project. This does not mean that all the spadework can't be delegated, of course it can. After all, that's the point of leadership and of employing qualified staff.

How?

First, without getting into detail, take a broad look at the nature of your operation. The perception of **Private Hire Operators** is that they all do the same thing: collect and deliver passengers (and packages for the courier businesses) within reasonable timeframes and, of course, safely. This perception is true of course but the differences are in the types of services offered, the vehicle fleets operated and the variety of clients served.

Some **Private Hire Operators** specialize in providing luxury transportation to executives, dignitaries, celebrities and so on whilst other operators offer more generalist services for the remainder of us less celebrated individuals. Either way, the opportunities for environmental improvements exist – irrespective of your specialisations. Cars and vans run on fossil fuels and emit **environmentally harmful CO2 gases** which, in turn, contribute to the effects of climate change. **Luxury cars** tend to use more fuel and **produce more CO2 per kilometer** than their less luxurious counterparts. The **good news** is that **all** vehicle manufacturers are now investing heavily to produce **greener versions of existing models** together with new models due for introduction over the next few years. **Toyota** may have led the way with the **Prius** but others, including **BMW** and **Mercedes** are not exactly slouching behind.

The important message here is to test your own current perceptions. For example, right now, the success of your business has been built on consistently meeting client requirements. However, according to a good deal of research, an increasing number of us are becoming aware of **global warming and oil related issues** and **would like to do something about it** – well over **61%** of us in fact, which is up from about **10%** just a few years ago.

ISO 14001 does **not expect** you to replace your existing fleet with rickshaws or vehicles with the greenest ratings but it does expect you to understand what your client requirements actually are. It also makes perfect marketing sense since, if it's

true that **61%** of us are **really concerned** about environmental issues, our requirements may rapidly change and your fleet may look very different in, say, two years time in order to meet them. So, the real question is **'How do you actually know what your client requirements currently are and what intelligence are you gathering to see how these may change in the near, mid and long-term future?'**

This question leads to others, such as, **'How much CO2 does our fleet actually produce, each year (based, perhaps, on average mileages) and how much fuel do we burn?'**

ISO 14001 is not about saintliness but about **'environmental knowledge'** and **'responsibility'**. Nor does **ISO 14001** expect you do anything that goes against the business culture or business case (**it's actually a very friendly standard and is really about common sense**).

As a business you'll also be using **electricity, water, gas and paper**.

How much are you using and have you done anything about possibly reducing your consumption?

You'll also be disposing of wastes, **how much and are these wastes being disposed of properly?**

The good news is that the answers to most of these questions are easy to find and we'll be providing formulas for you to assess environmental impacts in follow-up articles – **or immediately if you get in touch with the author**.

Without answers to these questions, though, you'll find it extremely difficult to set meaningful objectives to improve your environmental performance or to establish an **'Environmental Policy'** (which are **'top management must do's** for achieving certification).

Commitment: making a start

A good start point would be to demonstrate your commitment by drafting an initial **'environmental policy'** which needs to be appropriate to your business and should include the following (*paraphrased from the ISO14001 standard*):

- A commitment to continual improvement and prevention of pollution
- A commitment to comply with applicable legal requirements and other requirements to which your organization subscribes
- Provides a framework for setting environmental objectives and targets

It is also advisable to include your commitment to achieving accredited certification to **ISO14001** within the policy. Once drafted as a document, the policy needs to be:

- Communicated to all people working for or on behalf of the organization and
- Made available to the public

The Policy is the most important document in your **ISO 14001 Environmental Management System** and, once drafted, you'll have made the biggest step towards achieving certification. Feel good with yourself!



Bernard Hall is recommended by the LPHCA as a specialist ISO 14001 consultant with plenty of experience in the Private Hire & Courier sectors. For further information and advice please contact Bernard at consultindigo@aol.com or by phone on 07833 330295.