

# Six insights to get the most from your ISO certification

Insights from ISO certified  
firms on taking their  
management systems  
to the next level

## ISO Insights Report 2019

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# Author's Note

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Mango created the **ISO Insights Report 2019** so that we could share some of the best practice lessons of being certified to international management system standards from ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

We wanted to know “what makes some companies more satisfied with being certified than others”.

So from May 2019 to July 2019 we surveyed 242 organizations worldwide on the value they were getting from having certification to ISO management standards. The anonymous survey was conducted online via the Mango website and social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

These organizations are certified to one or more of these international management systems standards:

- ISO 9001 (quality)
- ISO 14001 (environmental)
- ISO 45001 (health and safety)
- ISO 22000 (food safety)
- ISO 27001 (information security)

The data has given us some expected and unexpected insights.

So how can you, a QHSE professional, get some actionable items from this report?

Well we're answering that question with **six insights**; these are specific findings to help your compliance system grow, based on the data we've gathered.

I hope it proves an interesting and, more importantly, a useful read.



Craig Thornton  
Owner/Director, Mango Limited

# Executive Summary

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## Getting the most from your ISO certification

Getting certified to and maintaining an ISO management standard is tricky and time-consuming. It requires a mixture of knowledge, compliance, improvement and hard work.

To keep certified you have to juggle a lot of balls. You have to deal with everything from Management reviews, internal auditing, to maintaining non-conformances, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Keeping certified takes discipline, skill, and a lot of understanding.

This is what ISO certified companies do every day. Day in, day out.

But there are better and more efficient ways to boost your certification.

According to the 242 responding companies in the ISO Insights Report 2019, there are six lessons that will help improve your systems and easily maintain certification to ISO management standards. They are:

### **Insight 1 – Stop focussing on compliance. Instead focus on improvements.**

Your time is precious. So when you are managing your ISO certification spend your time wisely. The survey found that if you spend more time on improvements then you will be more satisfied with being certified. The takeaway - spend most of your time making improvements to the business.

### **Insight 2 – Spending time on making improvements magically reduces the time for compliance activities.**

As you make more and more improvements to your business, the need for doing compliance activities reduces. This is because you will find ways to reduce waste involved with compliance. The more waste you remove means that less compliance is required. Easy!

### **Insight 3 – Committed Leadership increases satisfaction with certification.**

There is a core principle of management systems – “your management system will be more successful if there is commitment from leaders at all levels”. The survey

found something similar. With more commitment comes more satisfaction from being certified.

#### **Insight 4 – Committed Leadership results in increased participation.**

It is generally understood that if you have more worker involvement, participation, and engagement in certification to ISO standards then you will have an enhanced compliance with standards, regulations and laws. The survey found that that if there is more commitment from your Leaders, the higher the level of employee participation in the management systems.

#### **Insight 5 – Reason for getting certified is different to maintaining certification.**

For most organizations, customers are the initial driver for gaining certification. However, once you are certified, the main reason to maintain certification is that it improves your processes.

#### **Insight 6 – Employee participation drops off with larger businesses.**

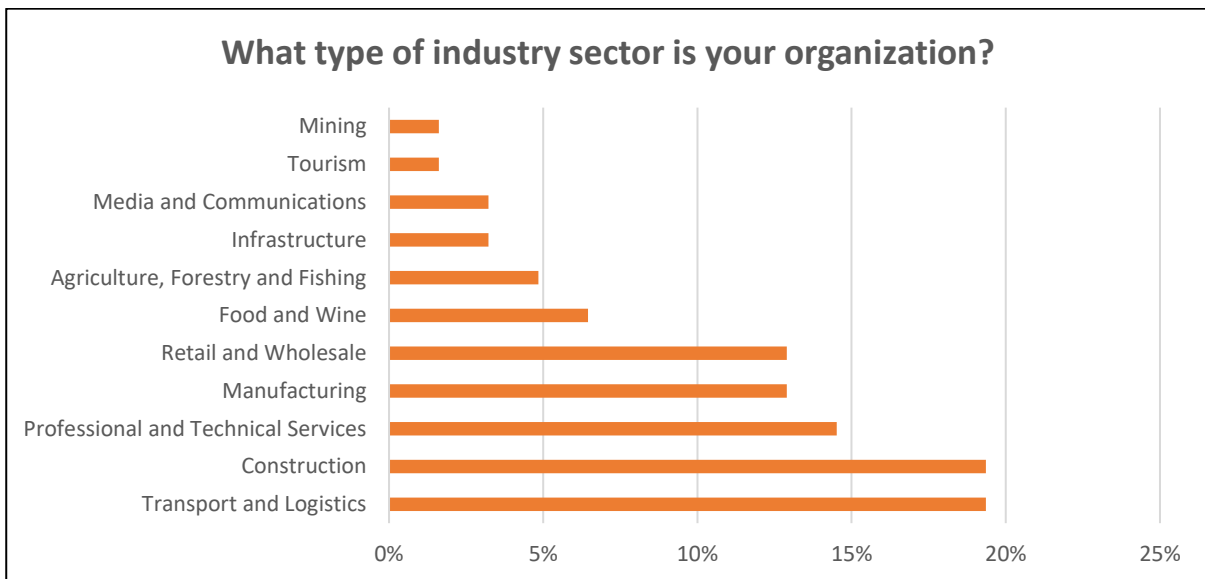
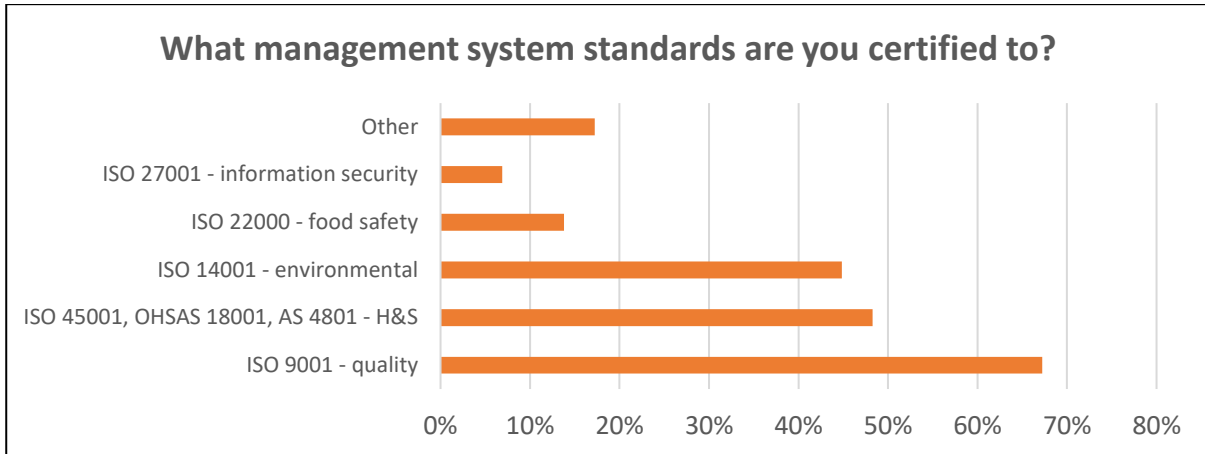
The survey found that as your business grows in size, your employees will become less engaged and will participate less in your systems. You need strategies to prevent this from happening to your business.

# The Survey Data

Survey Duration:

1 May 2019 – 31 July 2019

Total number of participants in the survey: n = 242





# Insight #1

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## Stop focussing on compliance. Instead focus on improvements.

The survey found that the more time you spend on making improvements to your management systems, the more satisfaction you will have with being certified to international standards.

This insight is something that we have predicted for years but have never had the hard data to back it.

For many years at Mango we've been advocating that QHSE Professionals should spend less time on compliance activities such as updating policies or procedures, updating spreadsheets and so on. Activities like these are just "busy work" which add no value to the organization.

You need to be getting out into the real world and making business improvements. This means doing things like "Going to the Gemba", conducting Kaizen events or conducting improvement projects.

Stop doing non-value-adding compliance activities. Instead, focus on doing value-adding business improvements.



Stop non value-adding compliance activity



Focus on value-adding improvements



# Insight #2

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## Spending time on making improvements reduces time for compliance activities.

Data from the survey suggests that the more time you spend on making improvements to your management systems, the less time is required for maintaining your compliance to the international standards.

This insight goes hand-in-hand with insight 1.

As you make more and more improvements to your business, your compliance time will “magically” be reduced. This is because you will find that you don’t need to document every policy or procedure. You won’t need another spreadsheet to maintain. You don’t need to add another register.

Therefore, use different lean tools to improve your business, tools like: Poke-yoke, Kanban, 5S, visible factory, value-stream mapping, and many others.

By using these tools you can reduce, combine or stop doing some compliance activities. You will be reducing the waste of doing compliance.



Focus on value-adding improvements



Use lean tools to make improvements to your management systems

# Insight #3

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## Committed Leadership increases satisfaction with certification.

The more your Leadership team is committed to their management systems, the greater the level of satisfaction from being certified to the international standards.

There has always been a common understanding that if your Leaders (at all levels in the organization) are committed to your management systems then you will get improved compliance and you will successfully pass your external audits.

This survey proves that point.

The survey shows that the higher the level of commitment from your Leaders, the higher the level of satisfaction from being certified there will be.

Your Leaders will set purpose and direction, get worker engagement and then get alignment to achieve objectives.

This is also reflected in “QMP2 - Leadership” in the 7 Quality Management Principles developed by the international experts in the Technical Committee ISO/TC 176. The ISO 9000, ISO 9001 and related ISO quality management standards are all based on these seven principles.

*Leaders at all levels establish unity of purpose and direction and create conditions in which people are engaged in achieving the organization's quality objectives.*

*Creation of unity of purpose and direction and engagement of people enable an organization to align its strategies, policies, processes and resources to achieve its objectives.*

# Insight #4

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## Committed Leadership increases participation.

The more the Leadership team is committed to their management systems, the greater the level of employee participation in those management systems.

Once again there has been an understanding in compliance that if you have more worker involvement, participation and engagement then you have an enhanced compliance with standards, regulations and laws.

The survey shows that if there is more commitment from your Leaders, the higher the level of employee participation in the management systems.

It is one of the seven quality management principles. Getting your employees participating and engaged in your management systems will make a huge difference to your organization.

From Quality Management Principle “QMP 3 Engagement of People”:

*To manage an organization effectively and efficiently, it is important to involve all people at all levels and to respect them as individuals. Recognition, empowerment and enhancement of competence facilitate the engagement of people in achieving the organization’s quality objectives.*

The survey indicates that having Leaders committed to your management system will improve the level of employee participation.

# Insight #5

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## Reason for getting certified is different to maintaining certification.

When a company is first certified the main reason is to meet customer requirements. Once certified, the main reason that companies maintain certification is because it can improve processes and improve the business.

If you talk to any number of QHSE Professionals they will tell you that the number one reason for getting certified to an ISO standard is that their customers demand that you get it. Certification can also be driven by the need to meet the demands of a contract or as part of a tender process.

Our survey proves this is true. The main reason for getting certified is that customers require you to get it.

Now, what is really interesting is that once you are certified the main reason for maintaining certification is to improve processes and improve the business.

So you get certified to ISO management standards to win business but once certified you use the framework of the standards to improve the processes and the business performance.

At some point it appears that businesses see the benefits of having ISO certification and then use the formal ISO processes to improve their business performance.

Businesses can see that ISO management standards help businesses:

- Work in a more efficient way as the processes will be aligned and understood by everyone in the business or organization.
- It increases productivity and efficiency, bringing internal costs down.
- Helps to meet the necessary statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Formally identify and address the risks associated with your business.

This is true of Mango too. Our customers don't need us to get certified to ISO 9001 and ISO 27001. It isn't in any contract or part of any tender. But we got certified to improve our organization and improve our brand to become more trusted.

# Insight #6

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## Employee participation drops off with larger businesses.

The larger the organization, the lower the level of employee participation in your management systems.

Now this is really an eye-opening insight.

The survey has identified that the larger the organization, in this case the larger the revenue, the lower the level of involvement and participation in your management systems from your employees.

It indicates that employees can “hide” in a larger organization.

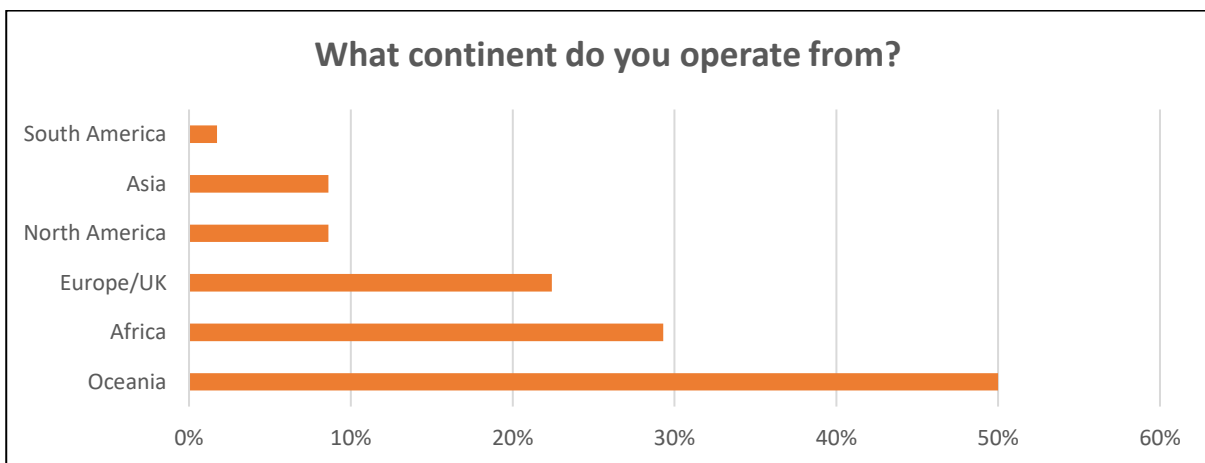
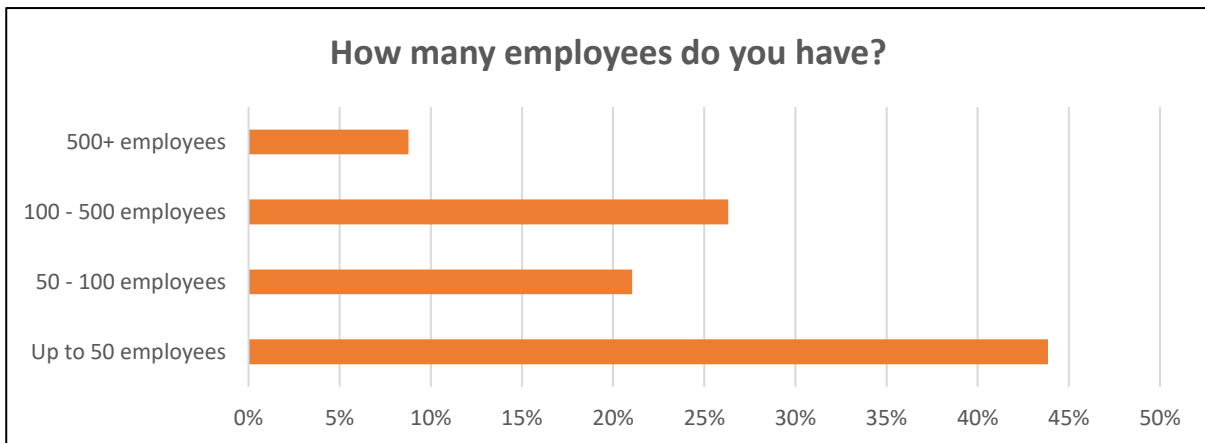
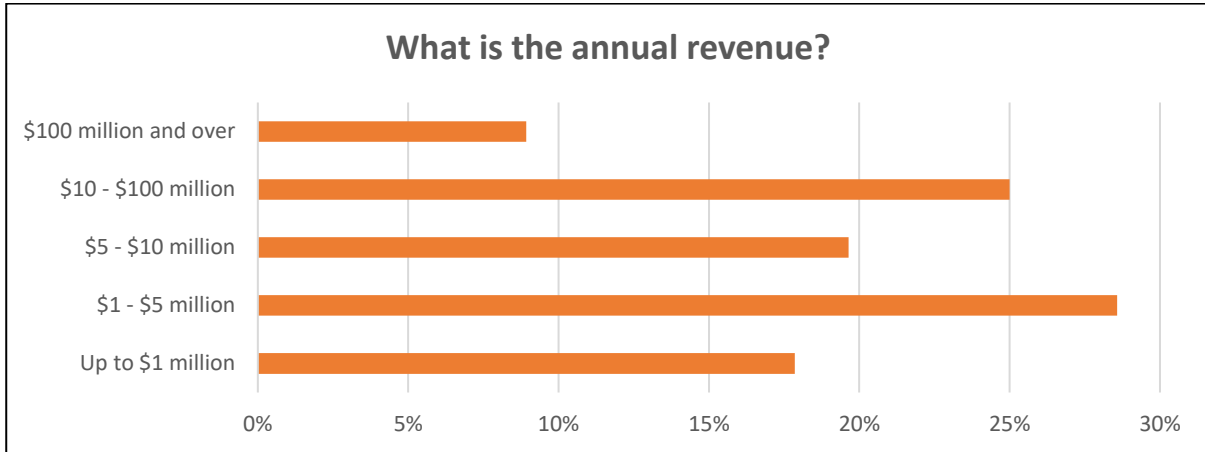
I have seen this phenomena when auditing larger corporate businesses. There generally is a “command and control” system in place. The corporate boffins set up some policy, send that policy down the line and then sit back waiting for that policy to be enacted. There is no engagement with the employees - it’s all one-way communication and the Leadership appears to be in the dark on what happens on the shop floor.

This approach allows the employees to hide away from the management systems because the Leadership isn’t communicating directly with them.

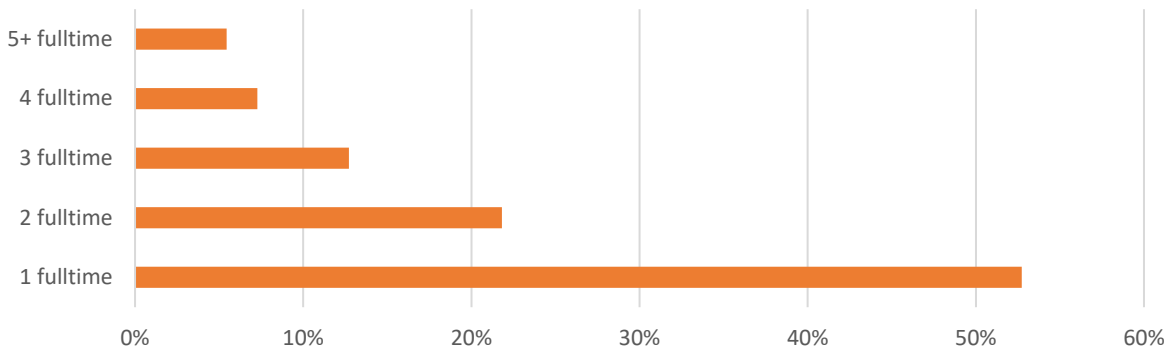
The employees will find their own way of doing business and will get the job done no matter what management system is in place.

# More Survey Data

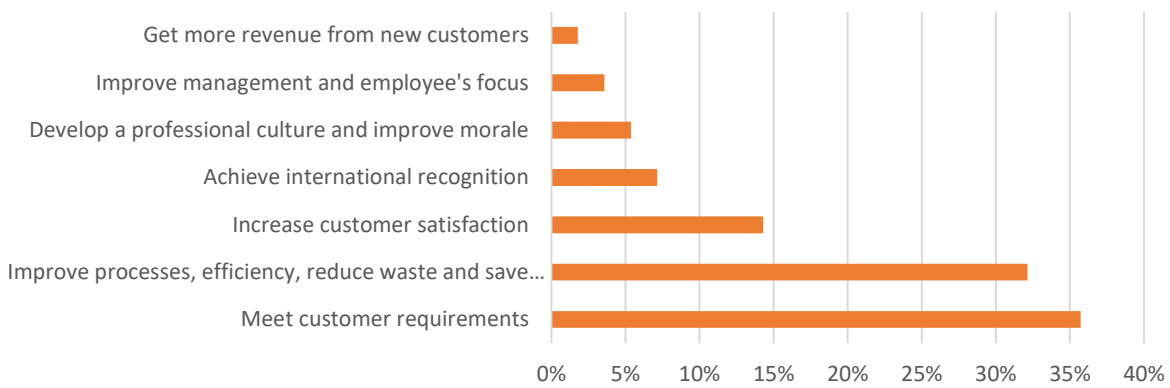
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### How many employees look after your ISO certified system?



### What is main reason for first getting certified to a standard?



### What is the main reason for maintaining certification to a standard in the future?



# About ISO Insights Report

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Mango created the ISO Insights Report 2019.

Mango's mission is to get everyone in your business involved and participating in your QHSE Systems. You can do this by integrating your Quality, Health, Safety & Environmental Management systems in the Cloud and on a Mobile App.

<https://www.mangolive.com/>

## Disclaimer

This report is intended as a guide only. Readers are advised that before acting on any matter arising from this document, you should consult a Consultant Advisor.