

CERTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH DIN ISO 9001:2000 AND DIN ISO 14001

Process-oriented Management System

ELSTER has been certified in accordance with DIN ISO 9001 since as early as 1992. In 2002, it was once again time for a certification audit. The aim of this audit was to switch the certification to the new DIN EN ISO 9001:2000 standard while at the same time comply with the environmental standard DIN ISO 14001. Since ELSTER has always paid particular attention to the protection of the environment, our chances of reaching the high standards required by this norm were very good from the onset.

While quality management systems concentrate on the requirements of customers, environmental management systems are very much concerned with the need for companies to protect the environment. That means that it is necessary to consider the demands of a number of different parties, i. e. the authorities, pressure groups and the neighbouring community, to name but a few, are all taken into account. As far as this area is concerned, ELSTER has always been one step ahead and has always ensured the whole company has been operated with environmental protection in mind. This certification is also a further contribution towards our company's desire to comply with international standards in order to remain competitive on a global level.

The sweeping changes currently taking place in the world of business and economics and the resulting need to react quickly to new market requirements has an effect on every part of a company, the management systems and the employees. This demands a high level of flexibility on the part of the management, the employees and the suppliers, who must all adapt as quickly as possible to the new market conditions if they want to be in a position to help shape the market of the future. In this process of change, every working procedure, every existing process and any unnecessary bureaucracy comes under scrutiny. The aim is to identify those processes bringing value to the company and to manage them as effectively as possible. It is essential that the company generates trust and that customers are confident their needs can be satisfied, especially in the anonymous world of globalisation.

With the ISO 14001 certificate we can prove to the whole of Europe, to the whole of the world in fact, that environmental protection has a high priority in our company and, in so doing, we can maintain our competitiveness.

With the help of an independent consultancy, the TÜV Management Systems GmbH, ELSTER GmbH and ELSTER Handel were prepared for the audits in the space of only nine months. The way this was carried out was extremely positive. First of all, the company's control committee drew up a new

quality and environment policy, which, on the one hand, reflected the new increased awareness in matters of quality and the environment and, on the other hand, also formed the basis for the realisation of the new annually-redefined company objectives. The second step was to show the complete operation of the company in a process-oriented manner.

The strengths of a process-oriented management system lie in the transparency of the company's system of operations, in the clear and unequivocal definition of interfaces which are adjusted in line with the value chains. Connected with this is a greater awareness on the part of each individual employee, who, on account of the clarity of the processes, can then better go about their daily duties. This leads to a continuous improvement of results and, in turn, to a higher degree of customer satisfaction.

In order to ensure that the employees accepted the new management system, it was important to involve as many of them as possible in the certification process – about 10% of the workforce actively took part. All of the employees involved were given intensive training in workshops at the beginning and all of the other employees were trained accordingly by their respective superiors during the implementation of the system. The result of it all was a lean management system and a high level of acceptance by the workforce, which not only fulfils the requirements of the two standards but also creates a certain transparency for our customers. In order to create a better overview, the processes were divided into three categories, management, core and supporting processes.

By integrating quality and environment management, it was possible to show certain elements of the operations in one process, for example, equipment and resources, corrective measures, definable goals, continuous improvement and training. In the middle of November, 2002, ELSTER GmbH and ELSTER Handel were successfully audited by the TÜV Anlagentechnik (the technical wing of German certification authority) and the certification was recommended. As a company which operates worldwide, it was important for us to have an internationally-recognised certifying institute carry out the audit.

First and foremost, our aim will always be to increase customer satisfaction and strengthen confidence in our performance and quality. With this new certification we have made an important step towards achieving these aims.

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