

**REMEMBER: IF YOU DO WHAT YOU'VE  
BEEN DOING, YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU'VE  
BEEN GETTING.**

**SOURCE UNKNOWN**

## Audit Performance

Audit performance is presented in the following topic areas:

- Audit Process Management
- Opening Meeting
- Audit Working Papers
- Data Collection
- Audit Analysis
- Exit Meeting

Note that these topic areas differ slightly from the ASQ BOK. The Primer authors chose to realign and consolidate the material for comprehension purposes.

## Audit Process Management

An audit team leader\* is authorized by the company or organization to manage the planning and performance of the audit, including the management of the audit team. The audit administrator or audit authority (often the quality manager) also has specific responsibilities. Many of these responsibilities are associated with the administrative functions of the auditing program. The audit administrator usually delegates many of the duties associated with carrying out the program objectives to the audit team leader including:

- Developing and gaining audit authority approval of the audit schedule
- Planning the details of audits
- Planning and preparing for audit team safety needs
- Conducting the audit
- Resolving conflicts
- Formally reporting the audit results
- Following up on actions taken as a result of the audit

To help assure the credibility of the audit program, the lead auditor is responsible for assuring (or assisting) in the development and training of audit team members, and identifying the retraining needs of existing team members.

\* This Primer uses the terms audit team leader and lead auditor interchangeably.

## **Audit Process Management (Continued)**

The audit team leader is ultimately responsible for all phases of the audit. The audit team leader's responsibilities also cover:

- **Assisting in the selection of other audit team members**
- **Preparing the audit plan and making effective use of resources**
- **Representing the audit team with the client and auditee**
- **Maintaining the ethics of the audit team**
- **Directing the activities of audit team members**
- **Providing guidance to auditors-in-training**
- **Defining the requirements of each audit assignment**
- **Complying with applicable auditing requirements**
- **Preparing working documents and briefing auditors as required**
- **Reviewing documentation**
- **Reporting critical nonconformities and conclusions**
- **Reporting obstacles in performing the audit**
- **Reporting audit results**

The above responsibilities are consistent with ISO 19011 (2008)<sup>1</sup>.

In the performance stage, the audit plans are enacted. Parties on both sides of the audit have specific responsibilities and protocol.

While auditors should be dressed appropriately to the formality of the audit, they should be aware of and respect any dress code requirements or safety regulations required for field work. This may entail wearing safety glasses, hard hats, gloves, or protective clothing or overgarments which are usually, but not always, supplied by the auditee.

As an example, some companies require that all personnel permitted on the industrial site wear steel reinforced safety shoes. To discover this upon arriving for the audit would demonstrate poor planning on the part of the auditing function and could postpone the audit. Prior to the arrival of the audit team, the lead auditor must ensure that all members of the audit team either have the required equipment or that they will be provided equipment by the auditee.

The lead auditor is responsible for directing the activities of the audit team in the field verification. Should the lead auditor give team assignments, inexperienced auditors or audit observers should be placed with seasoned auditors.

## **Audit Process Management (Continued)**

If the field work is considerable, it is advisable for the lead auditor to assign responsibilities of different areas of verification to members of the audit team. Elements, departments, categories or portions of the checklist questions can be split up to accomplish this. For example, one audit team member (accompanied by an escort) can perform the verification in the area of preventative maintenance. Another auditor (with escort) may pursue the verification of lot control existence and appropriateness. As a service organization example, one team member may verify cleanliness practices, while another might investigate the methods for perishable stock rotation. During the briefing, the lead auditor must advise the auditee if any additional escorts are needed for simultaneous audit activities.

Members of the audit team should read aloud to the auditee escort the objective information they record as evidence on the checklist to assure that information is complete and accurate. The daily briefings which are conducted with the auditee escort are a safeguard that important information is conveyed to the auditee. The daily briefings are a must if team assignments have been used.

### **Audit Plan Changes**

Audit plan changes are usually not very difficult in the case of internal audits. The audit schedule can often be adjusted for more favorable availability of departmental escorts, process scheduling or auditors.

In the case of an external audit, the lead auditor should specifically broach the subject of potential change from the original audit schedule. The audit team should be flexible enough to handle minor changes in process, equipment, product, or escort availability. Changes most often arise to accommodate an auditee request. Occasionally, the late arrival of an audit team member or significant change in audit focus might warrant a last minute priority change request on the audit team's part. Mutual give and take at this point is important for the subsequent atmosphere and intent of the audit.

Any change request should be discussed and agreed to, before the start of the audit. It is also important to communicate these changes (if significant) to interested and involved client and auditee parties.

## **Audit Interview Room**

Either by advance communication or at the opening meeting, a location should be established for the audit team to conduct meetings and hold private interviews. This is usually a conference room or a large office. This location serves as the central station for the duration of the audit.

## **Caucus Meetings**

Throughout the performance of the audit, two types of meetings are typically held on a daily basis. Both are conducted by the audit team leader. Audit team meetings are held between the audit team leader and team members. Daily briefings are held between the audit team and the auditee representative(s). These meetings are not to be confused with the opening or the exit meetings.

## **Audit Team Meetings**

The duration of team meetings should be as brief as possible, so that the auditee escorts are not kept waiting unduly and that valuable audit time is not wasted. Team meetings are private conferences among the audit team members only. The auditee escorts or other representatives are not included.

These meetings are conducted to:

- **Keep the audit team informed of developments**
- **Make revisions to the audit schedule**
- **Review and discuss evidence**
- **Examine observations and reach consensus on findings**
- **Inform team members of any change of assignments**
- **Have the team collectively examine complex issues**
- **Determine the acceptability of compliance**
- **Examine specific documentation or evidence for compliance**
- **Develop the audit report as the audit progresses (drafting begins on the first day of the audit!)**

## Daily Audit Briefings

In the case of external audits, two short meetings should be held with the auditee representative(s) each day of the audit. Often, these meetings are held with the auditee escorts. Some auditee organizations may wish to include an individual of higher authority (staff level) in some or all of these briefings. Usually these briefings are conducted in the morning and also near the end of the day. In each of these meetings, the lead auditor takes the opportunity to review with the auditee:

- Planned daily activities
- Any schedule changes
- Observations and findings
- Areas of concern
- Points awarded to categories or elements (scoring checklists)

These briefings keeps the auditee informed of how the audit is progressing and gives the auditee the opportunity to produce any evidence of compliance or conformance in areas of concern. The auditee representative is responsible for sharing this information with their management and other appropriate personnel.

## Discussion of Auditee Concerns

It is important that auditee concerns be addressed. This is true for most audits, particularly for internal audits.

In all audit situations, the lead auditor should point out the basic intents of the audit at hand. This clarification will vary somewhat depending upon whether the audit is internal or external or 1st, 2nd or 3rd party. It is worthwhile, on the lead auditor's part, to reiterate the key elements of the modern audit philosophy as well as the specific details of the audit at hand.

The lead auditor should detail the intent to audit specific systems, processes, procedures, products, etc. This is a good opportunity to remind auditee management that the audit is not to be directed at individual employees. Any additional specifics relative to the reporting procedure, schedule flexibility or confidentiality should also be addressed prior to the start of the audit.

## Audit Performance Overview

The performance of each audit can be specifically broken down into the following activities:

- The opening meeting
- Field work / interviews
- Conferences / briefings
- Exit meeting / draft report

Traditionally, there has been a great deal of fear and dread associated with being the subject of a quality audit. Job title or security could be at risk based on an auditor's report. The purpose of professional quality auditing is not to berate the auditee or to lay blame, but to work with the auditee management to improve the control systems.

### The Opening Meeting

The audit team should arrive promptly at the auditee's facility at the time indicated in the audit notification letter. It is the responsibility of the lead auditor to manage the performance of the audit in accordance with the audit program requirements. It is also the lead auditor's responsibility to assure that audit plans are carried out efficiently and effectively. The lead auditor is in charge of the opening meeting. The opening meeting is sometimes referred to as the pre-audit meeting.

After an exchange of introductions, business cards and pleasantries, the lead auditor will begin the opening meeting by passing out the copies of the audit agenda, which shows the time frame for this opening meeting as well as the day's activities. This agenda is a finalized version of the rough one previously sent to the auditee. Many auditors will document the planned audit activities for the full duration of the audit in this finalized version. The lead auditor will also distribute copies of the checklist questions. The lead auditor shall have prepared a brief presentation to recap and clarify the following information during the opening meeting:

- An introduction of the audit team (Including the name, title and qualifications) to the auditee's senior management
- The audit purpose, scope and objectives
- A summary of the methods and procedures of the audit

## **The Opening Meeting (Continued)**

- **The anticipated duration of the audit**
- **Any necessary agenda changes from the original**
- **Any applicable standards (International/National/Industry)**
- **Any pertinent logistics (escorts, transportation, rooms, resources, etc.)**
- **Any additions or deletions to the checklist questions**
- **Rating guidelines of the scoring checklist questions (if used), or other evaluation methods**
- **The tentative time and date for the closing meeting**
- **Communication channels between the auditors and the auditee**
- **A clarification of any unclear details of the audit plan**

**The auditee organization should have the appropriate individuals in attendance at the opening meeting. Attendance at the opening meeting is normally left to the discretion of the organization being audited. Auditee attendees could include:**

- **Quality manager or quality supervisor**
- **Key management representatives affected by the outcome of the audit**
- **Audit escort(s) (often one or more of the above, or a representative)**

**All of the opening meeting attendees, are not necessarily needed for the duration of the audit. For example, if the scope of the audit is limited to design, the design department manager, supervisor, or designated representative should be present.**

**Normally all managers or representatives of audit areas should attend the opening meeting. This way all concerned parties receive audit information (purpose, scope, schedule, etc.) at the same time. This eliminates the need to cover opening meeting items in each audit area.**

**Although the auditee's highest ranking officer may not necessary be at the opening meeting, he/she should be invited. His/her presence and a few encouraging words will show support for the audit and may increase the cooperation of other managers.**

## Audit Working Papers

The intent of audit working papers is to assist the auditor during the audit. The number of the potential working papers is tremendous. Examples include:

- Pertinent standards
- Pertinent policies, procedures, or work instructions
- Pertinent product or process flow charts
- Applicable Industry or National Standards
- Pertinent audit checklists, questionnaires or forms
- Pertinent log sheets or evaluation forms
- Any anticipated sampling plan details
- Applicable engineering drawings or service manuals
- Forms indicating interview topics, dates, attendance
- Ample copies of the audit questions and guidelines (for distribution)
- The audit agenda
- Other documentation pertinent to the audit (auditee's quality manual, contractual agreements, compliance standards, etc.)
- Phone extensions of any involved auditee individuals
- Auditee's organizational chart

The good news is that not all potential working papers are required for a specific audit. Certainly a person making a trip from Chicago to St Louis would not need a world atlas. Even if numerous reference documents have been brought to the auditee plant site, they can always be left in a conference room, if only needed for reference purposes.

The actual working papers used during an audit should be free of clutter and sufficiently organized for an auditor to find them, use them, and find them again easily (for data recapture and the final report).

The audit forms, questionnaires and checklists should note the area, interviewee and specific time in order to provide factual and objective reporting. These forms should be filled out in such a manner that the lead auditor, auditors-in-training or others can read them. Legibility of documentation helps with the final audit report and is useful in comparing consistency of detail between audit team members.

Checklists and checksheets are reviewed in some depth in Sections IV and IX of this Primer. However, since checklists and questionnaires are such important and common elements of audit working papers, another example is shown in Table 5.1.

## Internal Audit Checklist Example

The following questionnaire is consistent with Section 8.2.2 of ISO 9001:2008<sup>9</sup>, (Bensley, 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

Are internal audits conducted at planned intervals to determine whether the quality management system conforms to the planned arrangements, the requirements of ISO 9001, and the quality management system requirements established by [the company]?

Standard Element	Comments/Evidence
1. Is the internal audit program effectively implemented and maintained?	
2. Does the audit program planning take into consideration the status and importance of the processes and areas to be audited?	
3. Does the audit program planning take into consideration the results of previous audits?	
4. Are the audit criteria, scope, frequency and methods defined?	
5. Does the selection of auditors and conduct of audits ensure the objectivity and impartiality of the audit process?	
6. Are auditors prohibited from auditing their own work?	
7. Are the responsibilities and requirements for planning, conducting and reporting the results and maintaining audit reports defined by documented procedures?	
8. Does the management responsible for the area being audited ensure that actions are taken without undue delay to eliminate detected nonconformities and their causes?	
9. Do the follow-up actions include the verification of the actions taken, and the reporting of verification results?	

Table 5.1 Questionnaire for Internal Auditing

## Data Collection

Audit data collection consists broadly of two major portions:

- Questioning / Interviewing
- Field Investigation / Verification

Some of the questioning portions will take place in the designated conference room, office, or meeting room. Checklist questioning is used to verify the existence of formal (written) practices and procedures prior to the follow-up field investigation.

The field work is the physical verification by the auditor that the stated practices, procedures and methods (or other formal control systems) are utilized and followed as defined. The field work takes place in the area of actual production, service, or activity. This is usually most convenient for verification of activities and records.

Field work verification is performed following those questions which pertain to the particular process or stated practice. Most often, several items will be covered, and then pertinent issues will be followed up via field verification and investigation. This approach saves audit time by minimizing trips back and forth from the conference room to the plant floor (or service area). The auditee will appreciate the reduced potential for process disruption. Several trips to the same process to investigate or verify a different audit aspect is a result of poor planning.

Auditors should always fill out their own checklist questionnaire. The auditor's checklist copy is used to record the response and documentation given. However, the checklist may also contain notes on areas to be investigated, names of individuals to be called for interview, and questionable elements which suggest the existence of noncompliance. Checklists do not leave an auditor's hands once checklist completion begins. The auditor's checklist questionnaire is never left unattended (insuring audit integrity). It may be too tempting for the auditee to look over the filled in checklist questions and notes during a brief absence of the auditor.

To alleviate the anxiety of the auditee about what is being recorded, the auditor should read aloud what he or she writes in the response area of each question after information, documentation, and verification is presented. There are many advantages to this approach:

- It is a means for the auditor to check their understanding of what has been stated or presented
- It helps the auditor remain honest when writing the audit report
- It keeps the auditee informed so that there are no report surprises

## Questioning & Interviewing\*

Most of the information obtained during the performance of the audit will be through questioning of auditee personnel. While checklist questions are the auditor's guide, they should be written to allow for flexible questioning. The auditor should determine not only compliance, but also how adequate the compliance is. The way the questions are posed on the checklists is important.

Most of the questions should allow for some discussion and probing rather than just a simple "yes" or "no" response. This gives the auditee the opportunity to elaborate and possibly provide supporting documentation or evidence which may not be answered with a simple response. Open ended questioning can lead to other, more enlightening questions which are not on the checklist. These follow-up questions might concern:

- What type of technical support is provided?
- What function in particular is responsible?
- What specific types of analysis are performed?
- Is the analysis routine or problem driven?
- What is the response/result time?

In-depth interviewing may be used to:

- Check an operator's understanding of a procedure or method
- Determine the effectiveness of training programs
- Substantiate auditor observation(s)
- Reveal informal procedures or substandard practices
- Discover system deficiencies
- Uncover nonconformance

Information obtained from interviews should be substantiated by evidence from other independent physical sources such as:

- Documentation and records
- Witness by the auditor
- Sampling or measurement

However, statements made by interviewees can be accepted as objective evidence on their own merit.

\* The CQA student should note that a number of interviewing techniques were previously discussed in Primer Section III.