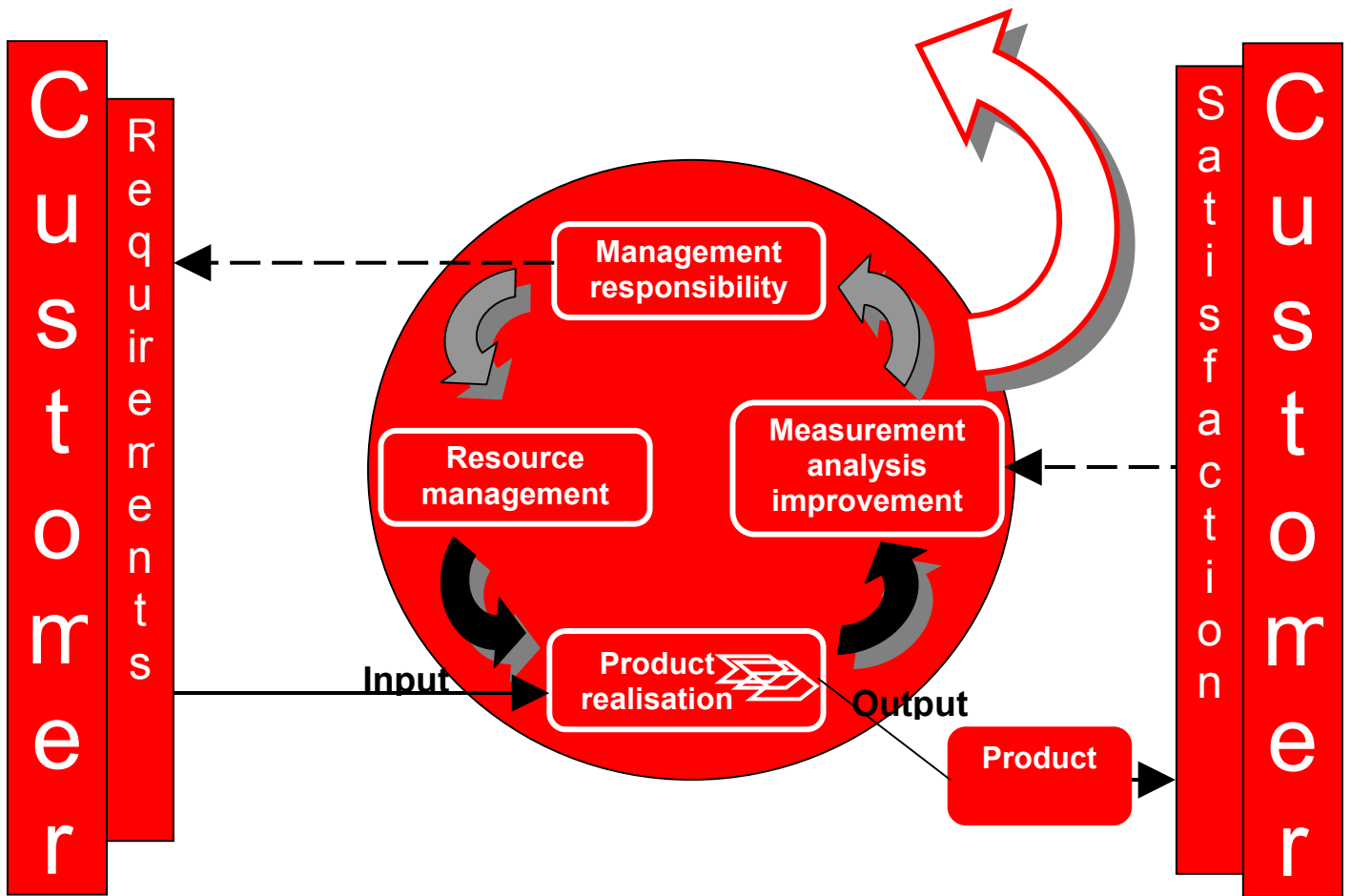


## **Customer satisfaction measurement and ISO 9001:2000**

The new BS EN ISO 9001:2000 standard has made customers the focal point of a process based quality management system. To quote from the introduction to the Standard:

*“This International Standard promotes the adoption of a process approach when developing, implementing and improving the effectiveness of a quality management system, to enhance customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements.”*

The diagram, reproduced from the Standard shows customers, not management, as the starting point of the quality management system. The role of management is *“to ensure that customer requirements are determined and are met with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction.”* Management is also responsible for making available adequate resources to enable the organisation to develop and deliver a product (the standard uses ‘product’ to mean product or service), which will meet those customer requirements. To judge the organisation’s success in achieving this core objective, customer satisfaction will have to be measured and the results used as a key ingredient for the continual improvement of the quality management system. This type of *“Plan-Do-Check-Act”* process is a continuous one, creating the need to identify customer requirements and measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis.



Source of diagram: BSI

Figure 1: Model of a process-based quality management system (BSI, December 2000).

This series of six articles will firstly clarify the customer satisfaction measurement (CSM) requirements contained in the new Standard before moving on to explain how to set up a CSM system which will meet the requirements of ISO 9001:2000 as well as providing a very reliable indicator of the extent to which your organisation is meeting its customers' needs.

### **The requirements of ISO 9001:2000**

There are many references to customers in the new Standard, starting right at the beginning where the Scope is defined in terms of meeting customers' requirements and using the quality management system to enhance customer satisfaction. The main references to CSM in the new Standard are shown in Table 1 and examined below.

<b>ISO 9001:2000, CSM requirements</b>	
<b>Section</b>	<b>Requirement</b>
1. Scope 1.1 General	This International Standard specifies requirements for a quality management system where an organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide product that meets customer and applicable regulatory requirements, and</li> <li>b) Aims to enhance customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for the continual improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable regulatory requirements.</li> </ul>
5. Management responsibility 5.2 Customer focus	Top management shall ensure that customer requirements are determined and are met with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction (see 7.2.1 and 8.2.1).
6. Resource management 6.1 Provision of resources	The organisation shall determine and provide the resources needed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To implement and maintain the quality management system and continually improve its effectiveness, and</li> <li>b) To enhance customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements.</li> </ul>
7. Product realisation 7.2 Customer-related processes	7.2.1 Determination of requirements related to the product The organisation shall determine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Requirements specified by the customer, including the requirements for delivery and post-delivery activities</li> </ul>
8. Measurement, analysis and improvement 8.2 Monitoring and measurement	8.2.1 Customer satisfaction As one of the measurements of the performance of the quality management system, the organisation shall monitor information relating to customer perception as to whether the organisation has met customer requirements. The methods for obtaining and using this information shall be determined.
8.4 Analysis of data	The organisation shall determine, collect and analyse appropriate data to demonstrate the suitability and effectiveness of the quality management system and to evaluate where continual improvement of the effectiveness of the quality management system can be made. This shall include data generated as a result of monitoring and measurement and from other relevant sources. The analysis of data shall provide information relating to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Customer satisfaction (see 8.2.1)</li> <li>b) Conformity to product requirements (see 7.2.1)</li> </ul>

Table 1: References to CSM in ISO 9001:2000

## **The main CSM requirements**

### **(i) Scope and management responsibility**

As previously indicated, customers play a pivotal role in the new Standard. The first section on the scope of the Standard makes it clear that the central purpose of the quality management system is to ensure that the organisation meets the needs of its customers and continually strives to enhance customer satisfaction. Indeed, Section 5 places this responsibility firmly with senior management who must also ensure that adequate and appropriate resources are provided to achieve this objective.

### **(ii) Customer requirements**

Despite the importance of customer satisfaction, the Standard offers virtually no advice on how it should be monitored. Section 7 stipulates that customers' requirements must be determined, "*including the requirements for delivery and post delivery activities*". The implication of this very brief and somewhat misleading phrase is that all aspects of the augmented product as well as the core product itself must be covered. ISO 9000 (Fundamentals and Vocabulary) provides some additional evidence. In the 'terms and definitions' section, 'requirement' is defined as "*need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory*". As we will see in Article 2, this rather loose use of the words 'requirement', 'need' and 'expectation' as though they are inter-changeable is not conducive to good CSM practice. However, in general terms the implication that customer requirements are all embracing is helpful. As we will see next month, 'customer requirement' can include any factors on which customers base their judgement of your organisation.

### **(iii) Customer satisfaction**

Until the latter stages of the development of the revised Standard, it seemed that organisations were to be required to do no more than monitor 'customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction'. This weak form of wording could have been addressed simply by monitoring customer complaints, leaving the situation little changed from the old Standard. Happily, this avoidance of any real obligation to satisfy customers was rectified in the final version of the new Standard. Indeed, clause 8.2.1 provides a commendable definition of customer satisfaction – "*customer perception as to whether the organisation has met customer requirements*". This aligns the Standard firmly with the Tom Peters view that 'perception is reality'. It is widely recognised in the customer satisfaction field that customers' perceptions do not always conform with reality. Customers have very long memories for anything that has upset them and it may take several good customer experiences to eradicate the negative attitudes arising from one bad experience. The implication of this definition is that compliance with the Standard's requirement to monitor customer satisfaction can be achieved only through asking customers about their level of satisfaction. Since the standard also stipulates the use of recognised analytical and statistical techniques, it will be necessary to formally survey customers rather than informally consult them during the normal course of business. In Articles 3 and 4 we will examine how a customer satisfaction survey can be conducted in a professional and reliable manner.

## **The transition to ISO 9001:2000**

ISO 9001:2000 is now a live standard. Organisations seeking assessment of their quality management system for the first time can be assessed to ISO 9001:2000 with

immediate effect and would be well advised to follow that course of action. Developing a new quality management system to the old standard would not be a sensible policy. Organisations who already have a system which conforms with ISO 9001:1994 or ISO 9002:1994 have a transition period during which they can continue to be assessed to their existing quality management system. The International Accreditation Forum has established a set of guidelines for Certification Bodies and this includes a maximum transition period of three years from publication of the new standard, which was published in December 2000. However, that is the maximum time period allowed, and registered companies are strongly advised to contact their own certification body to agree a suitable transition time for their own organisation. For organisations that have not previously measured customer satisfaction, developing that capability will be one of the more challenging requirements of the new Standard. It would be advisable to use 2001 to develop and introduce a professional and reliable CSM process prior to incorporating that process into the quality management system for later assessment. It is important however, that your transition plan is agreed with your certification body.

The remaining articles in this series will explain how to develop and implement a CSM process in your own organisation. Topics covered will include:

<b>Article</b>	<b>Topic</b>
2	Identifying customer requirements
3	Conducting the survey (1): Questionnaire design and sampling
4	Conducting the survey (2): Data collection and analysis
5	After the survey: Communicating the results and taking action
6	Moving beyond ISO 9001: CSM and ISO 9004