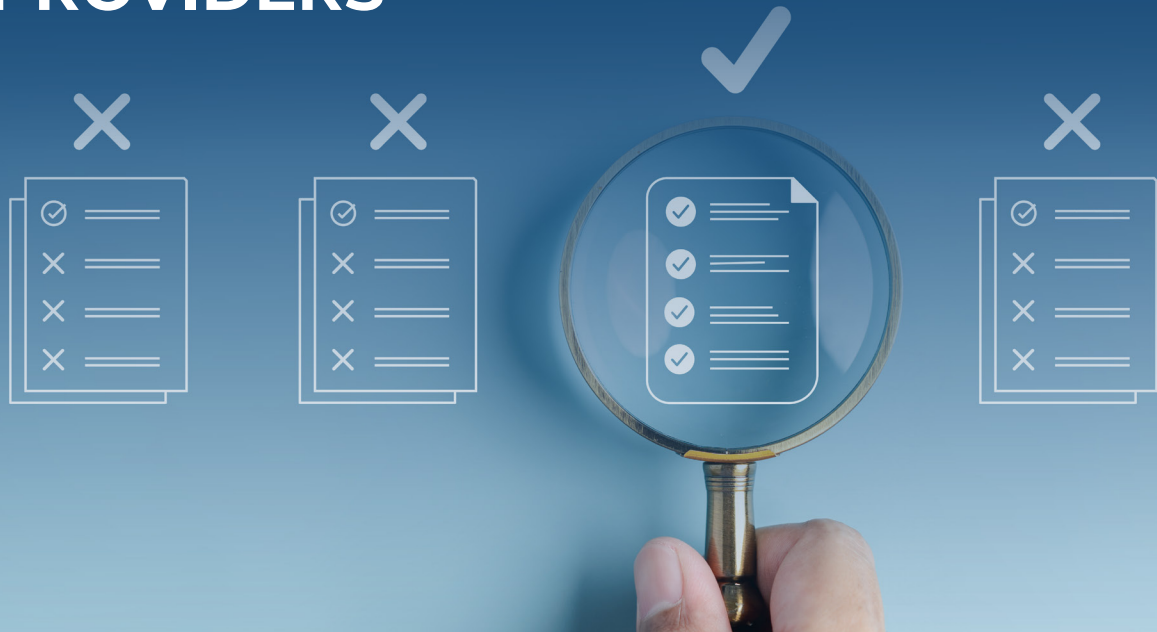# QUALITY MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION: A PRACTICAL NEXT STEP FOR MISSION-CRITICAL ICT PROVIDERS



**As our world grows increasingly dependent on information and communications technology (ICT), the quality of our communications systems is becoming increasingly important. After all, when critical systems go down, the impact can be immediate and far-reaching.** For evidence, we can look at the recent CrowdStrike incident, which reportedly caused disruptions across a range of industries and government agencies. The widespread impact of a faulty software update underscores the need for higher quality standards, especially those that support mission-critical ICT systems.

That's where TIA QuEST Forum's TL 9000 quality management standard comes in. Built as an extension of ISO 9001, TL 9000 provides a structured quality framework for organizations that deliver essential ICT products and services, such as those that keep emergency response networks, cloud services, communications, industrial, and enterprise control systems running. TIA QuEST Forum is in the process of evolving the TL 9000 standard to address the emerging needs of mission-critical ICT services. Whether you're interested in getting involved in defining it or pursuing TL 9000 certification, this article provides a brief overview of the process.

## THE JOURNEY TO TL 9000 CERTIFICATION

The road to TL 9000 certification begins with an understanding of the TL 9000 framework. Many organizations get familiar with TL 9000 by reading the TL 9000 Requirements Handbook or reviewing the resources listed below. From there, companies

select an accredited certification body to help define their scope of certification, choosing from hardware, software, services, or a combination of these types. TIA can help connect you to these resources.



## Get to Know TL 9000 Standard

- **White Paper**
- **TL 9000 Requirements Handbook**
- **Training**
- **Webinars and Presentations**

The journey continues with a gap analysis, which compares a company's existing processes to TL 9000 requirements and helps pinpoint areas for improvement. They can include improving documentation, streamlining operations, and tightening quality controls. This often leads to immediate gains in efficiency and risk mitigation for participating companies – before they even complete the certification process.

With gaps addressed, organizations formally register in the TL 9000 Registration Management System (RMS) and prepare for certification. This includes conducting internal audits, holding management reviews, and submitting performance data that's anonymized in our secure system.

The final step is the initial 3rd party certification audit, where the certification body evaluates the organization's compliance with TL 9000 requirements. While this audit may identify areas that need improvement, many organizations also use this opportunity to refine their processes so they can further improve quality. Certified organizations also gain access to valuable industry benchmarking data, helping them understand how their performance compares to competitors in their field(s). They can use this information to efficiently initiate improvement actions to strengthen their strategic competencies and concentrate resources in areas that will deliver the most benefit.

## ELEVATING QUALITY FOR MISSION-CRITICAL ICT PROVIDERS

TL 9000 provides several strategic advantages for organizations that provide solutions for high-stakes ICT services. Whether you're seeking to improve quality on a hardware, software, or service solution, TL 9000 can help with:

- **Better risk management:** Organizations with TL 9000 certification have a structured approach to identifying and mitigating risks before they escalate into service disruptions.
- **Operational efficiencies:** The process-driven nature of TL 9000 leads to fewer errors, improved workflows, and better alignment across teams.
- **Competitive differentiation:** Companies with TL 9000 certification stand out in the market, demonstrating a commitment to quality that builds trust with customers and partners.
- **Data-driven decision-making:** TL 9000-certified organizations gain access to industry-wide performance benchmarks, helping them refine their operations and stay ahead of emerging challenges.

## Help Shape the Future of TL 9000

The TL 9000 standard continues to evolve, and the next version is currently in development. By participating in the TIA QuEST Forum, you can help shape the future of TL 9000 and set a new standard for quality in the ICT industry. Along the way, you'll benefit from shared best practices that can help drive innovation and excellence across the sector.

Get involved today – contact us at membership@tiaonline.org

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