**Planning to perform audits**

I often see auditors who perform audits undertake this activity with little or no planning.  As with everything else in life, planning is everything.  An audit is much more effective for everyone concerned if the auditor takes a short amount of time to plan the audit correctly.   Here is a list of things to include in the planning of any effective audit:

**Initial contact:**

Make contact with the auditee and agree the date, time, location and scope of the audit.  This will include informing them of why the audit is being performed, what areas or activities will be looked at and the standard to be used during the audit.

**Location:**

Clarify the exact location of the audit (where it is to be performed) and check if any key activities that also need to be audited occur elsewhere.

**What do they do?**

Especially important for supplier audits: what does the organisation do for you and what to you do with what they supply you with?

**Performance data:**

Do you have any issues with the place to be audited?  Have there been any concerns raised?  Have there been any product quality issues?  What is their performance data, such as how reliable are they?  Have any changes been made since they were last audited?  This can help create focus areas for your audit.

**Review the previous audit report:**

This will highlight any concerns raised at the previous audit.  It may be worth following-up on any major concerns from the last audit to see if these were dealt with effectively.  The report should also show what areas were looked at last time, as it may be better to focus on some alternative areas this time.

**Select your team:**

Are you auditing alone, or are a number of auditors needed?  A Subject Matter Expert may be needed, or at least consulted before the audit.

**Select the duration:**

Establish how long the audit needs to take – there may be internal guidance within your organisation on this.

**Review any documents:**

It is a much better use of everyone’s time if you can review any key documents in advance.  Ask to see a Quality Manual, Site Master File, Site Layout, Organisation Chart, key Policies or Procedures that are important for the audit.  This will also allow for focus areas to be identified.  You may not always get them – but if you don’t ask you don’t get.

**Produce a programme:**

This will show the auditee what areas and processes you want to look at and the approximate times that you are expected.

**Review the standard:**

Check what the expectations of the standard that you are auditing against are.  If you are auditing calibration, see what the standard says about calibration.  If you are auditing training, then see what the standard says about training, and so on.

**Produce checklists:**

Produce a list of things that you and the standard expect to see when you are looking at specific areas.  This will ensure that you have a series of questions already to ask when you are on-site.

**Arrange any transport and accommodation:**

Especially for external audits, how will to get from A to B, where are you staying and how far is this from the site itself?  After all – you don’t want to be late!

**Any special requirements?**

Are there any special clothing, safety or access requirements needed?  Clarification here can avoid wasting time on the day.

**Communicate:**

Have good communication with the auditee before the audit, so they know exactly who is coming and what to expect during the audit.  Send them the programme so they can plan their time as well.

I hope this checklist helps with your audit planning.  If you would like to add any thoughts or comments, then by all means do so.  Good luck with your auditing.

If you need any more detail on how to perform effective audits, then consider attending one of our highly praised auditor training courses.

I hope this quick overview is of interest.  If you have any thoughts or comments, then just let us know.