



Guidance Notes: Difference Between Corrective and Preventive Actions

Introduction

There are two clauses within the ISO 9001 standard that appear to cause many people confusion as to their difference and how to approach each of them; 8.5.2-Corrective Actions & 8.5.3-Preventive Actions.

Within the standard the wording within each of the clauses is very similar which is probably where most of the confusion stems from.

8.5.2 Corrective Actions:

“The organization shall take action to eliminate the causes of **nonconformities** in order to **prevent recurrence.**”

8.5.3 Preventive Actions:

“The organization shall determine action to eliminate the causes of **potential nonconformities** in order to **prevent their occurrence.**”

Main Difference

You can clearly see from the excerpts taken from the ISO 9001 standard that Corrective Actions are taken as a result of non-conformances whilst Preventive Actions are taken against potential non-conformances to prevent them from ever occurring.

You should not be raising Preventive Actions after a non-conformance has occurred, you should only be raising Corrective Actions.

Corrective Actions

To address the Corrective Action clause you should be identifying the root cause of non-conformances that have already taken place and implementing immediate corrective actions to contain the situation and long term corrective actions to prevent their re-occurrence.

Detailed information on root cause analysis and techniques can be found within other guidance notes available on the IMS website.

Guidance Notes: Difference Between Corrective and Preventive Actions

Preventive Actions

This is usually where people take a step in the wrong direction, it is often seen that organisations are raising preventive actions as a result of a non-conformance and after they have identified corrective actions. Because they see the word “Preventive” within the clause they believe this means to prevent the non-conformance from re-occurring.

Types of Preventive Actions can include processes such as performing risk assessments against product, processes and health and safety activities. You are aiming to prevent a non-conformance from ever occurring by taking preventative measures.

Most organisations take Preventive Actions without knowing they are. Within the construction industry you will commonly see kick off and progress meetings throughout projects, these are preventive actions as the members present at the meeting will be discussing potential problems which may hold back the progress of the project.

Observations raising during internal audits could be classed as Preventive Actions as they can suggest improvements within the system to prevent non-conformances from occurring in the future.

Customer feedback is another method that can be used as Preventive Action evidence as customer suggestions may prevent any issues from being raised in future with regards to the service or product you provide.