



One Month to ISO 9001: Buckell Calls in the IMC

Anyone familiar with ISO 9001 certification knows that preparing for inspection can be quite daunting. Auditors evaluate a series of quality control standards including everything from production processes and equipment maintenance to employee training and customer relations. It is both a thorough and rigorous endeavor, and one that can have significant impact on a company's future. With all that is at stake, imagine being in a situation where the one employee charged with overseeing the entire process resigns—just one month before auditors are to arrive.

That's just what Brian Schell, president and owner Buckell Plastic Company, Inc., faced in the spring of 2005. With just 30 days until inspection, Schell was at a loss. That is, until a colleague in Mifflin County suggested he phone the IMC for help.

The History

Buckell Plastic Company, Inc., is a light gauge plastic thermoforming business that specializes in custom medical, consumer and electronic packaging. Buckell has roots dating back to 1964, when the business produced magnetic signs, license plates and other similar products from their facility in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The company eventually shifted to automated inline plastic thermoforming and in 1990 relocated to Lewistown. In December 2004, Schell moved the entire operation to a building in the Lewistown Industrial Park. This newer facility opened the doors to markets in the medical and food industries, critical to regaining business lost to price-competitive options from China. ISO 9001 was the next step in forging the company's future, and Schell recognized the need to bring in additional, focused support for the endeavor.

"Our attempts at ISO 9001 were not going well," Schell said. "We were making things too difficult...overcomplicating matters...and we really didn't have the proper resources at hand. That's why we hired an individual with experience in quality systems – and then, a month before the audit, he resigned."

The Call

With the audit date looming, Schell contacted Robert Postal, president of the Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation, for guidance. Postal suggested the IMC, and Schell quickly made the call.

"The IMC just 'dropped everything' and sent Sharon Hoffman down to work with us for the month. She helped us to regroup, get ready and pass the inspection without any nonconformances. We wouldn't have been able to do it without Sharon and the IMC."

The Difference

According to Schell, what really drove the process was Hoffman's ability to connect in a practical way with his managers.

"Making that connection is something that a lot of consultants don't do. But Sharon simplified the process and got the buy-in from the entire management team. They all took a part in the process, and that was critical given all that we had to accomplish in the short period."

Buckell had a lot to accomplish indeed, especially given Hoffman's assessment at the very onset. The IMC program manager indicated to Schell that the work in place and what they were ultimately planning would not pass inspections. Hoffman took charge and laid out a new plan to help the company gain ISO 9001 certification.

"She was extremely diligent," Schell said. "She orchestrated everything, and made very clear the responsibilities and timelines everyone would need to take on. She took those important first steps of engaging my staff and inspiring them to get the job done. We passed without question, and we owe that to Sharon and the IMC for leading the way."

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-- Brian Schell, President and Owner

COMPANY: Buckell
Plastic Company, Inc.
Lewistown, PA



717-242-3308 / 1-800-221-4428
www.buckell.com

PRODUCT: Custom Light Gauge
Thermoforming - Specialists in Medical,
Consumer & Electronic Packaging

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 30

FOUNDED: 1964

The Future

With ISO 9001 certification in place, Buckell Plastics has made significant inroads in the food and medical markets. The company has also developed new packaging products for electronics manufacturers. Despite the gains, Schell knows that he must have his eyes focused on growth if he is to remain a player in this highly competitive industry.

"We absolutely will work with the IMC again and will likely seek them for support in marketing and innovation management techniques. I look forward to tapping into their expertise and seeing the results in my business."