

Companies with quality, environmental or health and safety management systems such as ISO9001, ISO14001 and OHSAS18001 will be familiar with the requirement to demonstrate evidence of 'continual improvement'. For some businesses, especially those that are small, it can be difficult to know what to set as objectives and targets to achieve such improvements.

Here Jodie Read shares some of the ideas that have been implemented by other landscaping businesses.

Improvement opportunities can arise from across any part of the business; from sales and marketing to operations or human resources. Some may be low cost initiatives that are easy to implement, whilst others may take more time and investment. All can be planned to ensure the greatest chance of success.

Examples of real improvements that have been achieved

Examples of some real improvement projects implemented within landscaping businesses include:

- Introduce new estimating software for improved accuracy of job costing.
- Introduce the use of simple site survey forms to improve the consistency of data gathering from initial visits to prospective client sites.
- Reduce the amount of green waste being sent to landfill by setting up a composting process on site (subject to Environment Agency approval).
- Improve the operational efficiency and reduce both the financial cost and environmental impact of carrying out grounds maintenance visits by amending route plans so that technicians focus on sites within geographic clusters.
- Deliver refresher manual handling training to all operatives.

Using Fact based information

Each business is unique. The right improvements for any business will therefore also be unique. The examples above won't be right for every business, but were selected by landscaping businesses using fact based information from their own systems. Such information can be derived

SMART objectives lead to continual improvement



from an organisation's own internal audit findings reports, nonconformities or customer complaints etc. Recurring trends can help to a business to focus on what actions should be taken to improve performance.

SMART Objectives and Targets

Before setting any improvement objectives, it is worth remembering the words Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (often represented by the acronym SMART). In order to achieve an improvement objective, it is likely that a company will need to achieve a number of smaller targets. To ensure that each step is planned properly planned, the improvement

objectives and the associated targets should be documented.

A suggested 'Improvement Action Plan' template can be downloaded free of charge from:

www.penarth.co.uk/about/resources as a starting point, and allows progress to be recorded.

Following the plan

By following the documented improvement objectives and the associated targets, companies are more likely to be succeed in achieving their aims and will therefore be able to demonstrate continual improvement.

ABOUT JODIE READ



Jodie Read is the Managing Director of Penarth Management Limited; a company which helps to make businesses better, greener and safer through the provision of specialist compliance consultancy and training for quality, environmental, health and safety management. She and her colleagues assist companies to implement and maintain management systems, such as

ISO9001, NHSS18, ISO14001 and OHSAS18001. Jodie is also one of only a few approved ROLO trainers in the country. The company is an affiliate member of BALI and one of the first ever winners of the prestigious BALI Affiliate Award for Exceptional Service. If readers have any queries regarding continual improvement in business management systems, they are welcome to contact Jodie via email: jodie@penarth.co.uk or by telephone on 029 2070 3328.