



## Embrace the Management System

At the heart of the accreditation program is a management system. This is a formal description of how things are done and how they are managed *at your company*. It is worth stressing that whether or not you know it; whether or not it is documented; you have a management system. You are successfully running your business every day. Somehow people know what to do (and do it) without having to refer to forms, checklists or written procedures.

So you may ask, if we already have a system, why do we need to bother to document it? There are many reasons but the simplest is **to make sure you are doing what you think you are doing**. Too often, there is a disconnect between what the boss thinks is happening and what is actually happening. All too often, management assumes everyone is on the same page while in the proverbial trenches, the reality is quite different.

A well-documented management system is a means to achieve business objectives. It is a tool to communicate knowledge, to demonstrate compliance, and to establish 'best practice.' It is not something to be feared; it is something to be embraced. Done properly, it will:

- provide a level of consistency for your team.
- describe how things are done and how they are managed.
- increase understanding of current operations and the likely impact of change
- ensure consistency, set priorities, and change behavior.

Research has proven that document management systems are good for the bottom-line. They are much more valuable a ROI than any investment or time incurred. Companies that have a documented management system have higher rates of corporate survival, sales *and* profits. Research also strongly suggests that small businesses that implement a documented management system achieve proportionally more benefits than larger organizations.

I have written a management system that for all intents and purposes complies with the AC 478 criteria. This is a generic MBCEA document. It is in the "members only area" of the MBCEA website. You need to tailor and tweak it to your business. Whether or not you intend to pursue AC478 Accreditation, I encourage you to consider implementing your version of this powerful tool.

A few more thoughts: I cannot emphasize enough that this is not a book that sits on the shelf; it needs to be intrinsic in your everyday operation. In other words, **if you say you do something - do it**. Employees have an uncanny ability to know what is important and what is not. If you expect them to complete checklists or do Tool Box Talks but never verify that they are doing them, human nature suggests, over time the standard will lag. Your foreman will get lazy, skip a few, then a few more and when you fail to notice, will eventually stop all together.

If your management system says you always create an erection bracing plan, make a point of asking to review the plan with the foreman when you visit the job site. If your management system says your foreman completes several daily checklists and reports, make sure you are allocating enough time for him to complete these reports. Make sure you are paying him for this time. (Hint: if you value it, so will he.) Also make sure that he has

the necessary tools to do his reports, whether it be a smart phone, laptop or simple clipboard, pad and paper.

If your management system says you do annual performance reviews, there should be evidence in your employee files of annual performance reviews. If you have no intention of doing them; don't say that you do! Let me repeat that - If you have no intention of doing something; don't say that you do. You do not have to adopt my management system lock, stock and barrel. Add or subtract items based on the way you do business. But keep in mind, anything you say you do, should be readily demonstrable to an inspector. For example, an inspector should be able to grab an employee file at random and see evidence of annual reviews or a job file, at random, and see evidence of Tool Box Talks or Checklists.

**Periodically take the time to evaluate the way you do things and fine tune accordingly.** Maybe your foreman report format hasn't changed in 10 years but your business has. The guys are now scribbling in the margins or marking certain sections "not applicable". At least once a year, take the time for a quick review of your processes, checklists and forms. Is *this* still working? Can we do *that* better? What's missing? What is needed? Just like you periodically check your equipment and perform routine maintenance, you need to do the same for your management system.

Last thought: **Version Control.** You need to treat your management system with the same level of version control that you afford blue prints. Don't have one revised set in the office and an old out-dated set in the field! Just as you have a maintenance log for your equipment, it stands to reason that you need a process to ensure everyone is working from the most current version of your management system. In other words, change is good but only "everyone is singing from the same hymnal!"

If you have any questions or require any additional information, refer to the Members Only area of the web site or contact me directly at [jmeiluta@comcast.net](mailto:jmeiluta@comcast.net).

Sincerely,  
Jackie Meiluta