# Planning for a Quality Assurance Automotive Audit

Getting your quality management system certified to one or more recognised standards is an excellent way to flag your dedication to these aims to your customers

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**One sure-fire way to demonstrate your commitment to your customers is by getting your quality-management systems certified according to the standards most relevant to the industries that you serve. Achieving these certifications, however, can be a daunting task. Our guide takes you through the planning process, what to expect and how to get the best outcome for both your business and your customers.**

Today's customers expect nothing less than perfection and it is incumbent on all manufacturers to ensure that they meet this expectation.

Take the automotive industry, for instance. As cars and their components grow ever more complex, it has never been more important for companies operating in a given automotive supply chain to demonstrate their commitment to quality to car manufacturers.

Those companies that can show that they are agile enough to anticipate changes, continually improve their processes and can increase their efficiency will win the most business.

### Certifying your dedication

Getting your quality management system certified to one or more recognised standards is an excellent way to flag your dedication to these aims to your customers. At Luvata Welshpool, our quality management systems are certified to two key standards: IATF 16949 and ISO 9001.

### Thorough understanding

The first step to obtaining such certifications is to thoroughly read, and understand, the standards and what they are designed to achieve.

First published in 2016 as a replacement to ISO/TS 16949:2009, the IATF 16949 standard brings a unified approach and addresses several aspects of quality management systems in the automotive industry.

These aspects are:

- process efficiency and effectiveness;
- customer satisfaction;
- continuous improvement;
- defect prevention;
- supply chain optimisation.

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IATF 16949 is implemented as a supplement to, and is to be used in conjunction with, ISO 9001. Organisations use ISO 9001 to show their ability to consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements, and to demonstrate continuous improvements to their processes and products.

**Many benefits**
The benefits of achieving IATF 16949 certification can be significant; companies both large and small have used the standard to profound effect, delivering significant cost and efficiency savings.

When customers see that you are certified by a recognised body, they know that you have implemented a system with the singular aim of meeting, and even exceeding, their requirements. This means that they can trust that you will deliver what you promise.

In order to win big automotive customers, you will have to demonstrate that you are able to provide high-quality, defect-free products, and the IATF 16949 certificate will prove it. By using the process approach of IATF 16949, you will not only look at the individual processes in your organisation, but also at the ways in which those processes interact with one another. In doing this, you will identify areas for improvement and optimisation within your organisation.

Perhaps most importantly, you can take a great deal of pride in the effort. The certification requires teamwork and for everyone in your organisation to buy into continual improvement as a concept. Achieving the certification is not just a certificate for the company, but serves as a testament to the dedication and hard work of everybody in your team.

**Ongoing process**
Achieving IATF 16949 and ISO 9001 certifications for your company typically involves implementing a quality management system according to the requirements laid-out in the standards, and then hiring a recognised external certification body to audit and approve your work.

It is important to recognise that gaining and maintaining these certifications are not single events; rather, they require a series of connected, ongoing audits and reviews undertaken to ensure that your organisation and management systems are compliant.

At Luvata Welshpool, planning for any external audit starts the day after our last external audit. We carry out numerous internal audits and we update our key performance indicators (KPIs) on a weekly and monthly basis.

### First steps

If you are looking to achieve these certifications for the first time, you will need to start by laying-out your quality policy, quality objectives and quality manual, which together will define the overall scope and implementation of your quality management system. Further, you will need to develop the processes and procedures necessary for your organisation to properly manufacture and deliver your product.

### Internal audits

Once all of the processes and procedures are in place, you will need to operate the quality management system for a period of time, before conducting an internal audit.

The goal of the internal audit is to ensure that you have records in place to confirm that your processes comply with the standards, and to find problems and weaknesses that would otherwise stay hidden. Indeed, an internal audit can be invaluable in helping to create faster, more effective, and more efficient processes, but there are best practices that you should be following to get the most from it.

Critical to the success of an internal audit is the development of an audit schedule that can be shared with the team. IATF 16949 requires that you subject all your processes to audit during a three-year period, and knowing when each process is scheduled for audit enables everyone to get prepared. The schedule needs to consider the complexity and significance of each process and should remain flexible enough to cope with changes following events such as complaints from customers and changes to processes.

With the schedule in place, the internal auditor should discuss the timings of the reviews with those responsible for each of the processes to be audited. The auditor should

review past audits to determine if they need to follow up on any concerns or issues raised in them, and the process owner can point out any areas that they would like the auditor to focus on. The auditor can then begin to gather the information they need on the process to ensure that it aligns with what is written in the quality management system, and that it produces the desired results. The auditor should also make a note of any aspects of the process that could be improved upon.

A closing meeting can then be scheduled with each process owner to discuss any problems that exist, and any changes that could provide improvements. You need to document these findings in record form for future reference and follow-up.

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**Management review**

Following the internal audit, a formal management review should be undertaken to evaluate the relevant facts about the quality management system, so that appropriate decisions can be made and resources assigned accordingly (see boxout). Corrective actions can then be taken to tackle the root causes of any identified problems and the solutions can be documented.
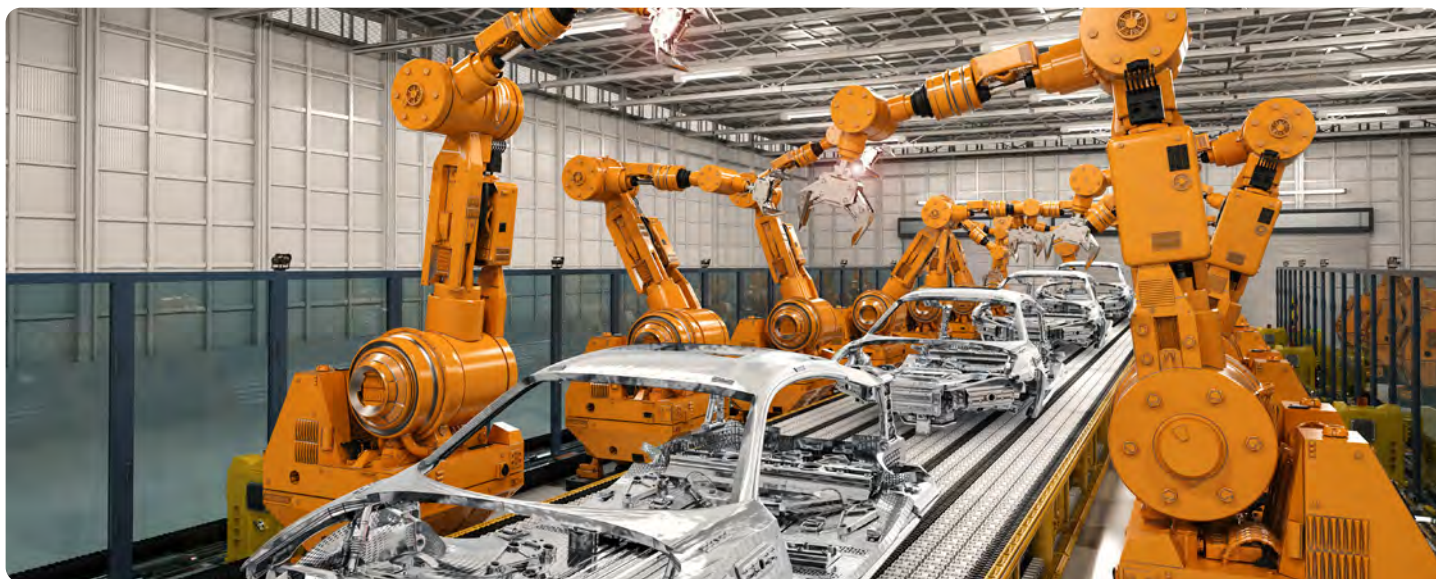
**External audit**

Finally, you will be ready to apply for company certification. For IATF 16949, the company certification process is divided into two stages:

- Stage One (documentation review) – The auditors from your chosen certification body will check to ensure your documentation meets the requirements of the standard;
- Stage Two (main audit) – Here, the auditors will check whether your actual activities are compliant with both the standard and your own documentation by reviewing documents, records, and company practices.

The quest for perfection is never ending and, like many quality assurance managers, the thought that the quality of the products and services their company provides might drop, may keep them awake at night. Opening up your organisation to an external audit helps to prevent this from happening and drives you to excel. Further, by certifying your systems to recognised standards, you can maintain and build upon not only your professional culture, but also the morale of your colleagues.

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**Prior to any external audit at Luvata Welshpool, we hold a management review where we examine our integrated standards and evaluate the performance of the organisation. We will discuss:**

1. Actions from previous management reviews;
2. Changes in external and internal issues relevant to the quality management system
   a. Needs and expectations of interested parties including compliance obligations
   b. Legal requirements and other requirements
   c. Risks and opportunities
3. Information on the performance and effectiveness of the quality management system
   a. Needs and expectations of interested parties including compliance obligations
   b. Extent to which targets and objectives have been met
   c. Process performance and conformity of products and services.
   d. Nonconformities and corrective actions
   e. Monitoring and measurement results
   f. Audit results
   g. Performance of external providers
   h. Its significant environmental aspects
4. The extent to which the quality management system, policy and objectives have been met
5. Information on the performance and effectiveness of the quality management system including trends in:
   a. Incidents, nonconformities, corrective actions and continual improvement
   b. Monitoring and measurement results
   c. Fulfilment, results, evaluation of compliance with obligations and legal requirements
   d. Audit results
   e. Risks and opportunities
6. Adequacy of resources for maintaining effective quality management system
7. Communication from Interested Parties including complaints
8. Effectiveness of actions taken to address risks and opportunities
9. Opportunities for continual improvement

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**About Luvata Welshpool**

We specialise in the design, prototyping and precision engineering of high quality, customer specified components and assemblies, for use in a wide range of applications worldwide.

We offer a unique combination of in-house cold forming, precision CNC machining and assembly techniques, backed by an unrivalled level of customer support.

We started out as a manufacturer of critical parts for anti-lock braking systems on military aircraft almost a century ago. Since then, we've partnered with customers in almost every sector of industry, from automotive and motorsports, to aviation, power distribution, electronics and medical.

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