



## ISO 15489: A Change for the Better



**A sound records management program ensures sound business practices. There's no better way to implement a successful records management program than by using a standard that's embraced worldwide: ISO 15489.**

According to Intel CEO Craig R. Barrett, featured in the February 2005 issue of *ISO Focus* magazine, "Companies that embrace standards that have been globally adopted and reflect worldwide consensus are in the best position to succeed because they are able to create world-class products based on high-quality standards."

This international standard is not only used on a company-wide level; entire countries are adopting it to organize critical data and improve operations.

### Why Implement ISO?

The ISO 15489 standard forces businesses to examine procedures and improve the way they manage crucial records and information. It demonstrates a drive towards constant improvement and a commitment to maintaining the most effective and efficient information management program.

An effective records management system can prevent a negative domino effect on an organization. For instance, the official closing of the Millennium Dome in London took more than 12 months because of the absence of adequate records. A legally binding contract could not be found for 129 suppliers that had submitted invoices totaling more than \$78,000 U.S. between October 1998 and September 2000. Consuming \$981 million U.S. of England's national lottery money, this project embarrassed the

ISO 15489: Information and Documentation-Records Management is the global benchmark for quality records management practices. Published in October 2001 by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), this guide standardizes policies and procedures to ensure that appropriate attention is given to all records within an organization, and that the evidence and information they contain can be retrieved more efficiently and effectively.

Since its 2001 inception, many U.S. and worldwide companies representing a vast number of industries have adopted ISO 15489 and reaped the benefits of improved records management.



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# Putting ISO 15489 to Work for Your Business

## SYSTEC Solutions: Putting ISO into Practice

Revamping your records management system to be in synch with ISO 15489 standards is no small feat. SYSTEC professionals will help bring ISO 15489 to your processes, as well as assess, design and implement records management solutions that your clients will trust for consistency, quality and value. If your business is global, ISO 15489 will also help you meet international records management standards.

For more about how SYSTEC can help you utilize the ISO 15489 standard to improve records management in your organization, contact us at 1-877-7SYSTEC or email us at [info@systecgroup.com](mailto:info@systecgroup.com).

ISO 15489 provides an effective roadmap for records and information management success through a two-part series: ISO 15489-1 and ISO/TR 15489-2. ISO 15489-1 (Part 1) gives an overview of records management and guidance on how companies can design and implement a quality records management system. ISO/TR 15489-2 (Part 2) is a technical report that gives specific guidelines that will help ensure a quality records management program. It also discusses recommended processes for implementing a system that meets the requirements in Part 1.

The first step in making ISO 15489 a reality in any organization is to obtain the actual guidelines, which are available through the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) website at [www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org) or through ISO's website at [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org). There are two volumes (Part 1 & Part 2), each of which costs approximately \$70.

Implementing ISO 15489 seems like a daunting task, but is quite simple when it's broken down into eight key steps:

1) preliminary investigation; 2) analysis of business activity; 3) identification of new records management requirements; 4) assessing integration of existing systems; 5) defining new records strategies; 6) records system design; 7) system implementation; and 8) review of new system implementation.

### 1) Preliminary investigation

This involves understanding and assessing an organization's role and purpose within applicable environments and markets.

### 2) Analysis of business activity

Take an in-depth look at an organization's internal structure, processes and activities. The goal is to get a clear understanding of how the company's

records and information are created and utilized throughout the specific business process within the organization.

### 3) Identification of new requirements

The background gained in steps one and two provides the foundation for identifying what influencing factors affect the creation and maintenance of records in an organization. These requirements can vary, depending on a company's processes and legislative responsibilities and regulations. Compile a list of priorities as well as regulations and compliance issues to address during the RIM redesign process.

### 4) Assessing integration of existing systems

From an informal "fetch and file" system to a complex program, virtually all companies have some form of records management in place. By assessing existing systems, one can determine what older processes a company needs to integrate with newly created processes.

### 5) Defining new records strategies

Once all requirements and priorities have been identified, develop a company-wide strategy that incorporates policies, standards and practices that address all needs. In developing strategies for records system design and implementation, remember these key characteristics of a records system:

- Reliability – accuracy and immediacy of recordkeeping
- Integrity – control systems, especially with respect to electronic record-keeping
- Compliance – regulatory expectations.
- Comprehensiveness – covering the complete range of business activities
- Systematic creation and maintenance – policies and formal methodologies



#### 6) Records system design

Now it is time to design a records management system that incorporates best practices and, most importantly, mirrors an organization's requirements. Beyond considering all the data generated, the organization's size, its available resources and geographical dispersal must also be considered.

#### 7) System implementation

Implement in easy-to-manage stages, each with an appropriate consultation period to ensure that the new system reflects the needs of its users, as well as the standard's requirements. This involves reconstructing the existing systems to meet the new criteria or phasing them out. Since the new system will have direct impact on staff, it's essential to conduct comprehensive training at this stage.

#### 8) Review new system implementation

Once implemented, ensure all systems are working as designed, all records are accounted for, and that the entire staff has a thorough understanding of how this new system operates on a daily basis. Remember that reviewing, improving and monitoring should be continual parts of every records management program.

Be patient, as it's not uncommon for the entire implementation process to take 3–5 years. Adopting ISO's prestigious reputation to your records management practices is well worth the time and effort. Let the professionals at SYSTEC help make ISO 15489 a reality in your organization. For more information, call 1-877-7SYSTEC or email us at [info@systecgroup.com](mailto:info@systecgroup.com). ■

## ISO Goes Global

ISO 15489 was published in October 2001 as the first global standard for records management. Roughly two years later, it took the world by storm. Authored in English, ISO 15489 has been translated into German, French, Dutch and Mandarin Chinese, making it one of ISO's most successful publications since the ISO 9000 series of quality codes in the 1990s.

Shortly after October 2001, ISO 15489 was accepted as the Australian Records Management standard, called AS (Australian Standard) ISO 15489. This replaced Australia's original guide from 1996 — AS4390. ISO was then adopted as a British Standard, BSI ISO 15489, but was also accompanied by a three-part "public document" guide to the standard.

The French national standards authority Association Française de Normalisation (AFNOR) published it as NF ISO 15489 Information et documentation – "Records management." In Germany, the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN) called it DIN ISO15489: Information und Dokumentation – Schriftgutverwaltung. In the Netherlands, only the first part was published as NEN-ISO 15489.

In addition to its European popularity, ISO 15489 has become a records management standard in Canada, China, the U.S., and many other nations. In fact, it took an ISO sub-committee three years of hard work to draft ISO 15489. The sub-committee had members from a global community including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Sweden, U.S. and Peoples' Republic of China.

Perhaps what makes ISO so popular is its portability. It is a model method designed to provide general guidelines and a process for any company, from any country around the globe. In one universal voice, this records management template, speaks about the importance of records management and gives detailed instructions on how to do it successfully. ISO 15489 is a true pioneer of international records management. ■



Having an ISO-compliant records management system provides continuity in the event of a business disaster. It can also help organizations uphold their reputation and regulatory responsibilities, and avoid costly litigation or counter litigation.

## A Change for the Better

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British government. ISO 15489 can prevent losses like this by demonstrating how vital controls, checks and balances can be put into place.

Organizations that have implemented the standard have realized valuable benefits. First, it measures the relative effectiveness of a records management program against a widely supported international standard. Also, by adopting ISO processes, management often becomes more aware of the benefits that an improved records management program can offer, which leads to more established, consistent methodology and clearly defined RIM functions. ISO 15489 can also help organizations establish programs or update records management related job descriptions. Plus, it's applicable to any size business, since all sound records programs should have similar components and outcomes.

Another clear benefit of this worldwide standard is protection. Having an ISO-compliant records management system provides continuity in the event of a business disaster. It can also help organizations uphold their reputation and regulatory responsibilities, and avoid costly litigation or counter litigation.

An organization that makes a commitment to implementing ISO into its business' practices sends a clear message to clients, employees and stakeholders that it is dedicated to quality records management on all levels. This builds trust, as it ensures that vital information is organized and secure. ■

Ask the  
**EXPERT**



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**Q:** Is ISO 15489 different from other ISO standards?

**A:** Most ISO standards are highly specific to a particular product, material or process. ISO 9000 deals with quality management: enhancing customer satisfaction by meeting regulatory requirements to improve performance. ISO 14000 focuses on environmental management: minimizing harmful effects on the environment caused by a company's activities. ISO 15489 deals with records management: standardizing policies and procedures to ensure that evidence and information contained in records can be retrieved more efficiently and effectively. ISO 15489 is not a government regulation, but rather a standard of excellence that provides guidelines to achieve a higher level of accuracy, integrity and efficiency in document management practices. For more about ISO standards, visit their website at [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org).



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