BERTEL PARTNER

9001

WHITE PAPER · QUALITY MANAGEMENT

# ISO 9001 :2026

## What changes, what stays – and how to manage the transition with confidence

A guide from the auditor's perspective for top management, quality managers and internal auditors

BERTELPARTNER GmbH · Leverkusen

Edition September 2026

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# 01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
# EVOLUTION, NOT REVOLUTION

On 16 September 2026, ISO published the sixth edition of ISO 9001. The new ISO 9001:2026 replaces the 2015 edition – without questioning its proven foundation.

The structure, the process approach and the ten clauses of the Harmonized Structure remain in place. Organisations that operate an effective, living QMS to ISO 9001:2015 today are not starting from scratch. Instead, the revision sharpens priorities that well-run organisations already pursue – and makes them **auditable**.

Three topics will carry particular weight in audits: top management promoting **quality culture and ethical behaviour** (clause 5.1), the **separate treatment of risks and opportunities** (clause 6.1) and the **planning of changes** (clause 6.3). In addition, the 2024 climate change amendment is fully integrated, requirements on knowledge, interested parties, internal audit and management review are clarified, and Annex A has been substantially expanded with interpretive guidance.

Certified organisations can expect a three-year transition period. That sounds comfortable – but only for those who start early. Experience from the 2015 transition shows that integrating the upgrade into the regular audit cycle saves cost, additional audits and scheduling pressure in the final year.

**16 Sep 2026**

Publication of 6th edition

**~3 years**

expected transition period

**3**

key topics with audit weight

**10**

clauses – structure unchanged

OUR RECOMMENDATION IN ONE SENTENCE

Use the next six months for a thorough gap analysis and schedule the transition with your certification body as part of your next regular surveillance or recertification audit.

# 02 BACKGROUND
# THE ROAD TO ISO 9001:2026

The revision was approved in 2023 by the responsible committee ISO/TC 176/SC 2 and developed over roughly three years. The aim was not to reinvent quality management, but to adapt it to a changed environment: supply chain volatility, digitalisation, sustainability expectations and a growing recognition that quality is above all a matter of mindset and leadership.

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|---|---|
| 2023 | ISO/TC 176/SC 2 decides to revise ISO 9001:2015. |
| February 2024 | Amendment 1 (climate change) adds to clauses 4.1 and 4.2 of ISO 9001:2015. |
| 27 Aug 2025 | Draft International Standard ISO/DIS 9001 released for international ballot. |
| December 2025 | National member bodies approve the DIS; comment resolution begins. |
| July 2026 | Final Draft (ISO/FDIS 9001) – technical content fixed, editorial changes only. |
| 7 Aug 2026 | ISO/TC 176/SC 2 announces FDIS approval with broad international support. |
| 16 Sep 2026 | **Publication of ISO 9001:2026** (6th edition). |
| Late 2026 – 2027 | Certification bodies are trained and accredited for the new edition; first ISO 9001:2026 certificates issued. |
| approx. Sep 2029 | Expected end of transition – ISO 9001:2015 certificates cease to be valid. |

**NOTE ON THE TRANSITION PERIOD**

Binding transition rules are set at the level of international accreditation – since 1 January 2026 by the Global Accreditation Cooperation as successor to IAF and ILAC – and implemented nationally by the accreditation bodies (in Germany: DAkkS). Three years from publication is customary and widely expected. Confirm the exact deadline and the rules for transition audits with your certification body.

# 03 OVERVIEW
# THE CHANGES AT A GLANCE

The following overview summarises the changes we consider relevant compared with ISO 9001:2015 – together with the typical action required for an existing QMS.

## 4.1/4.2
Context & interested parties

ISO 9001:2026

Climate change integrated in the text; more methodical consideration of interested parties

TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED

Update context analysis and stakeholder matrix traceably; justify climate relevance

ISO 9001:2015: Climate change added via 2024 amendment

## 5.1
Leadership & commitment

ISO 9001:2026

**New:** top management promotes quality culture and ethical behaviour

TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED

Define concrete, demonstrable leadership actions; link to values and integrity framework

ISO 9001:2015: Commitment to the QMS and customer focus

## 6.1
Risks & opportunities

ISO 9001:2026

**Restructured:** 6.1.1 General, 6.1.2 Risks, 6.1.3 Opportunities

TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED

Separate the method: assess and treat risks, actively identify and pursue opportunities

ISO 9001:2015: Addressed together in one clause

## 6.3
Planning of changes

ISO 9001:2026

Significantly strengthened requirements for systematic change planning

TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED

Document a change process covering purpose, consequences, resources and responsibility

ISO 9001:2015: Planned changes to the QMS

## 7.1.6
Organisational knowledge

ISO 9001:2026

Stronger focus on retaining and sharing knowledge

TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED

Review knowledge retention for turnover, retirement and digitalisation

ISO 9001:2015: Determine, maintain, make available

| | |
|---|---|
| **7.3**<br>Awareness | ISO 9001:2026<br>**Added:** awareness of quality culture and ethical behaviour<br>TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED<br>Extend induction and awareness training content<br>ISO 9001:2015: Policy, objectives, contribution, implications |
| **8**<br>Operation | ISO 9001:2026<br>Clarifications of operational control<br>TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED<br>Check process descriptions against the new wording<br>ISO 9001:2015: Operational planning and control |
| **9.2/9.3**<br>Internal audit & management review | ISO 9001:2026<br>Aligned with the updated Harmonized Structure, incl. extended management review inputs<br>TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED<br>Update audit programme, checklists and management review agenda<br>ISO 9001:2015: Established requirements |
| **A**<br>Annex | ISO 9001:2026<br>Substantially expanded: guidance on clauses 4 to 10<br>TYPICAL ACTION REQUIRED<br>Use as reference for interpretation, training and audit (informative, not a requirement)<br>ISO 9001:2015: Brief explanations |

This overview does not replace reading the standard. Only the published ISO 9001:2026 is authoritative.

# 04 IN DETAIL
# THE KEY TOPICS FROM AN AUDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

## QUALITY CULTURE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR (5.1, 7.3)

Probably the most visible change: top management must actively promote a quality culture and ethical behaviour. The standard does not prescribe a catalogue, but Annex A gives guidance on how this promotion becomes evident. For audits this means: a policy on the wall is not enough. Auditors will ask about practice – and verify it at every level of the organisation.

For the first time, ethical behaviour is explicitly part of the QMS. In a quality context this mainly concerns the integrity of data and records, the handling of errors and nonconformities, open reporting of problems, and fairness towards customers, suppliers and employees.

- How is top management visibly involved in quality topics (e.g. Gemba walks, quality reviews)?
- Are errors reported openly, without blame – and how does this show in the data?
- How is the integrity of inspection and quality data ensured?
- Are quality culture and ethics part of awareness training, objectives and management review?

PRACTICAL TIP

Define two or three measurable indicators for quality culture – such as the number and lead time of improvement suggestions, participation in problem solving, or the results of a short culture survey. This makes a 'soft' topic audit-proof.

## TREATING RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES SEPARATELY (6.1)

The 2015 edition addressed risks and opportunities together – in practice this often produced risk registers in which opportunities were at best a footnote. The new structure of 6.1.1 to 6.1.3 clearly separates the two: risks (potential negative effects) are to be determined, evaluated and treated; opportunities (potential positive effects) are to be identified deliberately and pursued where appropriate.

A formal risk management system to ISO 31000 is still not required. What is expected is a traceable, appropriate method and a visible link to context, objectives and actions.

- Split the existing risk and opportunity matrix or add a separate opportunity assessment.
- Assign owners, timelines and effectiveness evaluation to opportunities.
- Create cross-references: context (4.1), interested parties (4.2), objectives (6.2), management review (9.3).

## PLANNING OF CHANGES (6.3)

Changes to the QMS – new sites, reorganisations, new software, relocations, new products – are among the most frequent causes of quality problems. The revision therefore strengthens the requirements for planned and systematic implementation. Purpose and potential consequences, the integrity of the QMS, available resources and responsibilities are expected to be considered in advance.

- Establish a uniform change process with triggers, evaluation and release.
- Verify effectiveness after implementation and report it in the management review.

## CLIMATE CHANGE, KNOWLEDGE, INTERESTED PARTIES

The climate change amendment introduced in 2024 is now part of the text: the organisation must determine whether climate change is relevant to its purpose and consider that interested parties may have climate-related requirements. A bare negative statement without justification is generally not sufficient – a traceable assessment is expected, e.g. regarding supply chain risks, customer requirements or extreme weather.

For organisational knowledge, retaining and sharing move to the fore – a highly topical issue given demographic change and skills shortages. Requirements on interested parties also become more precise: it must be clear which of their relevant requirements are addressed through the QMS.

## DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

ISO 9001:2026 does not prescribe specific technologies. However, the expanded Annex A and the emphasis on context, risks, knowledge and change make one thing clear: organisations introducing AI-based tools, automated inspection systems or new IT platforms must control their impact on product and process quality just like any other change. This creates close interfaces with information security (ISO/IEC 27001) and data integrity.

# 05

SECTOR STANDARDS

## IMPACT ON IATF 16949, EN 9100, ISO 22163 AND INTEGRATED SYSTEMS

Many of our clients are certified to a sector standard that contains or references ISO 9001. The revision does not take effect there automatically – the decisions of the respective scheme owners are decisive.

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|---|---|
| **IATF 16949** | IATF 16949:2016 is built on ISO 9001:2015, which must be applied alongside it. How and when IATF adopts the new base standard is decided solely by IATF (e.g. via Sanctioned Interpretations or a revision). Until then, existing rules remain unchanged. In substance, automotive suppliers are already well positioned on risk, change management and knowledge. |
| **EN 9100 / AS9100** | The aerospace 9100 series is owned by IAQG, which aligns its revision with the new ISO 9001. IAQG dates and transition rules must be observed separately. |
| **ISO 22163 (IRIS)** | The rail standard ISO 22163 incorporates ISO 9001. Impacts and transition arrangements will be communicated via ISO and UNIFE/IRIS and remain to be seen. |
| **ISO 14001:2026** | The environmental management standard was already revised in April 2026. Organisations with an integrated management system can bundle both transitions and realise synergies – e.g. in context, climate change, interested parties and change planning. |
| **ISO/IEC 27001, ISO 50001, ISO 45001** | The common Harmonized Structure eases integration; updates to the shared clauses should be managed centrally. |

**RECOMMENDATION FOR SECTOR-CERTIFIED ORGANISATIONS**

Do not wait for the scheme owner's decision before you begin. The core topics – quality culture, opportunities, change planning – are audit-relevant anyway and strengthen any QMS. The formal transition then follows the applicable rules.

# 06 ROADMAP
# FIVE STEPS TO ISO 9001:2026

The following roadmap has proven itself in our audit and consulting practice. Time frames are guide values for a mid-sized organisation and should be aligned with your own audit cycle.

**01**
MONTHS 1–2

## Orient & assign responsibility

- Obtain the standard and Annex A, brief top management and the QM team
- Define project ownership, budget and schedule
- Agree the transition date with your certification body

**02**
MONTHS 2–3

## Gap analysis

- Compare the existing QMS with ISO 9001:2026, clause by clause
- Rate by effort and audit relevance, create an action plan

**03**
MONTHS 3–9

## Implement

- Quality culture and ethics: leadership actions, indicators, communication
- Separate risks and opportunities methodically, sharpen the change process
- Update documentation, process descriptions and cross-references

**04**
IN PARALLEL

## Enable

- Delta training for internal auditors and process owners
- Awareness activities for all employees (7.3)

**05**
MONTHS 9–12

## Verify & transition

- Internal audit against ISO 9001:2026 and management review with new inputs
- Transition audit as part of the regular surveillance or recertification audit

07

FROM AUDIT PRACTICE

# COMMON PITFALLS - AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

From hundreds of audits in the automotive, rail, aerospace, chemical and service sectors, we know the patterns that repeatedly lead to findings during standard transitions.

| ✕ PITFALL | ✓ BETTER APPROACH |
|---|---|
| **Quality culture on paper only** | Don't write a new policy – make existing leadership routines visible and back them with indicators. |
| **Opportunities as inverted risks** | 'Risk: losing customers – opportunity: winning customers' convinces no auditor. Derive opportunities from context, market and technology. |
| **Climate change dismissed wholesale** | Assess and document relevance with reasons – even 'not relevant' needs a traceable rationale. |
| **Changes without planning** | Apply the change process to organisational and IT changes too, not just product changes. |
| **Late transition** | Auditors and audit dates are scarce in the final transition year. Integrate the upgrade into a regular audit. |
| **Mere renumbering** | The revision is not a format change. In the audit, effectiveness comes before documentation. |

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> ISO 9001:2026 rewards organisations in which quality is already a leadership responsibility. For everyone else, it is the right occasion to get there.

Alexander Bertel · Lead Auditor

# 08 HOW BERTELPARTNER SUPPORTS YOU

YOUR PARTNER

BERTELPARTNER combines many years of experience as lead auditor for internationally recognised certification bodies with hands-on expertise in industry, information security and management systems. We know the auditor's perspective – and translate it into pragmatic solutions for your organisation.

### 01 ISO 9001:2026 gap analysis

Structured comparison of your QMS with the new edition, including a prioritised action plan and effort estimate.

### 02 Leadership workshop on quality culture

Half-day workshop for top management: requirements, evidence, indicators and communication.

### 03 Delta training for internal auditors

The changes, new audit questions and practical cases – on-site or remote.

### 04 Internal audit / pre-assessment

Independent internal audit to ISO 9001:2026 as a dress rehearsal before the transition audit.

### 05 Integrated management systems

Combined transition with ISO 14001:2026 and alignment with IATF 16949, EN 9100, ISO 22163 or ISO/IEC 27001.

**IMPARTIALITY**

We strictly separate consulting and certification. We do not audit organisations we advise on behalf of a certification body – in line with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1.

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# LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR TRANSITION.

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Sources (selection): ISO/TC 176/SC 2, revision update (08/2026); DQS GmbH, ISO 9001 revision at a glance; CQI | IRCA, ISO 9001:2026 revision guidance; DNV, ISO 9001:2026 revision; SGS, ISO 9001:2026 key updates.

Disclaimer: This white paper is for general information and reflects publicly available knowledge as of September 2026. It replaces neither the text of the standard nor the transition rules of accreditation and certification bodies. No liability is accepted for the accuracy of the information. © 2026 BERTELPARTNER GmbH.