



Roy D'Ardenne (standing) conducts training session.

Emphasis on standards >

Executive Summary:

International standards, embodied in the ISO qualification, has taken on an level of importance that tells exporting companies they must comply to compete. D'Ardenne Associates helps companies qualify.

By Gene Marrano

ISO standards (International Organization for Standardization) have been around since the mid-1980s, first as a benchmark for manufacturing (ISO9001), then for environmental, occupational safety and health, food safety and information security. A Roanoke-based training firm with more than 120 years of real-world experience collectively is now bringing its expertise to organizations regionally and nationally.

Roy D'Ardenne decided to go into business himself in 1993 after going through several downsizings and job

changes in the manufacturing world. Within the past year he has expanded, bring on Vice Presidents Steve Anderson, Clay Hodges and Susan Snyder. Each has experience in a particular industry niche.

D'Ardenne Associates concentrates on ISO training and consulting for aerospace and defense, IT service management, automotive, environmental and health firms, among others. It conducts audits, offers management consultation, logistics support and training for topics ranging from operational efficiency to systems implementation.

"We are training all types of businesses and industries," says Roy D'Ardenne, "depending on [the business model]." Changes over the past decade have put less emphasis on ISO documentation and more on process monitoring.

The firm features four-day training programs for clients at Hotel Roanoke, a curriculum endorsed by Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement. D'Ardenne says the goal "is to bring people to the Roanoke area."

An affiliation with BSI Management Systems

(formerly an arm of the British government has helped towards that end. There are some funds available from Virginia's Department of Business Assistance to defray the costs of ISO training.

The goal for companies D'Ardenne Associates works with is having international standards put in place, with corporate buy-in from the top of the management pyramid to assembly line and office workers. Making sure a firm's workflow isn't affected by ISO implementation is paramount: "Our number one priority is not to interrupt the work," says Snyder.

ISO standards certification—often demanded by buyers of products and services—helps improve quality, drive innovation, facilitate global trade and provide safeguards for employees. According to D'Ardenne, he performs third party certification audits after a firm implements ISO standards. He's

worked with businesses that have employed as few as five people.

Snyder worked with government contractors in the aviation industry, where AS9100 is the specific version of ISO. "There's a lot of [aerospace] in this area, people just don't realize it," says Snyder, pointing to Federal Mogul, the Radford Arsenal and Moog as three examples.

Costs for training varies considerably and can run into five figures.

"A lot of times you can use existing processes and documentation – and not offer a lot of extra 'fluff' they don't need," says Anderson. "It's all about closing any loopholes found on an initial audit [or gap analysis], from front office through the operations."

D'Ardenne says, "You are implementing a culture change. It will drive things to the bottom line." 