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Manufacturing Customer Satisfaction

For Anchor Advanced Products in Waterbury, Conn., commitment to quality is more than “skin deep.”

Anchor assembles and decorates deep-drawn metal parts such as lipstick and cosmetic containers for customers including Revlon, L’Oreal and Mary Kay. It’s a global business that is highly competitive, and an industry where looks are critical. Often, a fraction of a penny difference in cost per piece or a missed deadline can spell the difference between financial success or failure.

Anchor has had formal quality-improvement processes in place for more than eight years, and had doubled its business over the past five years. But Anchor’s leaders knew that being good today isn’t enough to ensure business in the future. As a worldwide supplier, they realized that achieving ISO 9000 registration would give them an important competitive advantage, especially in the European and Asian marketplaces, where this quality standard is widely recognized.

The assignment of achieving ISO 9000 registration fell to General Manager Stephen Hopkins. He began searching for an outside preparation group to help his organization with ISO technical writing requirements, coaching and training.

“I have worked with a number of quality consultants, and have seen companies assemble reams of unusable paperwork, instead of focusing on those things that have the greatest impact on customers,” says Hopkins. “We wanted to be first in our marketplace to achieve ISO registration, and wanted to work with a company that could cut through the fat and get right to the meat.”

“We found that capability with American Quality Resources.”

American Quality Resources (AQR) President Michael P. Enders says helping Anchor achieve registration was only part of the challenge ... Anchor approached him in August 1996 with the intention of becoming registered *before* the end of the year.

“Normally, this process can run anywhere from 12 months to 18 months,” Enders explains. “The traditional steps include preparation research, obtaining buy-in from management, process mapping and then creating and revising the actual documentation, training and auditing procedures.

“Anchor already had a good attitude toward quality. Our mission wasn’t to reengineer all of their practices, but more to define and document those practices against the ISO 9000 Standard.”



Enders and his team worked with Anchor to create the documentation necessary for achieving registration, what Enders calls “their personal quality manual and standard operating procedures.” AQR conducted a two-day internal auditing class, and then coached the Anchor team through implementing changes and through final preparation. Fourteen weeks later, Anchor was recommended for registration by their registrar.

Hopkins credits their success to an attitude of, “If something needs to be done, get it done well and efficiently,” but also compliments AQR’s ability to make Anchor’s quest for ISO 9000 registration a “user-friendly” process.

“AQR helped us by identifying the critical factors, and by making this process easy to understand and to execute,” Hopkins adds. “The system they helped us establish wasn’t bureaucratic or technocratic - it was straightforward, and always focused on meeting customer needs.”