

Views on elements of success and positive influence by EMS and environmental audits from study on scholarly and scientific articles

Introduction

The following text is a part of a study which have been performed in the State-of-the-art phase of the Synergy Audit project, by its partners. It contains of readings of scholarly and scientific articles in which the focus of the Synergy Audit study has been to map benefits of usage of environment management system (hereinafter EMS) and environmental audits (hereinafter audits) in the environment quality work of organisations. The scientific articles involved in the study have e.g. been performed as case studies in private and public organisations on several continents. Further, the study involves case-studies on organisations ranging from small business toward big industries. We hope that this text can be of help for further studies in the area and/or as initiation of facts in help for organisations in the start-up and/or continuous EMS and audits work.

If you have any questions and suggestions on this text we are grateful to hear about it (see contact information below).

Literature study

Organisations with several management systems gain in trying to integrate their audits into one synergetic system where they can overlap each other in the activities within the organisation. The possibility to make profit on the audits by acting from the suggested improvements in audits are highly valued in organisations (Simon Alexandra et al. 2011). It has also proven of strong value to integrate everyone in the organisation in environmental quality work (Simon Alexandra et al. 2011). A proven successful way of doing that is to spread knowledge on audit outcome to all members of organisations. This increase both knowledge about problems and thereby also open the thinking on ways to do tackle the problem areas (Simon Alexandra et al. 2011).

To carry out audit in depth and on-going in organisations are of benefit compared to more random audits that look more on the surface. Of importance is also to highlight the positive environmental impact on audit performance e.g. following legal requirements (Joseph F. Guida, 1982).

Further, the role of a leadership which are both interested in- and eager to improve their environmental management work toward decrease of negative environmental impact is of outmost importance for a positive audit EMS outcome (Zutshi Ambika et al. 2004). This goes hand in hand with that the staff must be willing to change according to the aim of the EMS. Further knowledge on how to run EMS and on environmental matters are of great importance. Beyond that, the knowledge and communication regarding visionary perspectives with the stakeholders are of sizeable importance, as is input of learnings from

other organisations (Zutshi Ambika et al. 2004).

Furthermore, in planning of an EMS the sustainability work would benefit from being integrated with other long-time plans in the organisation and thereby effectively involve several activity areas within which work on decrease of environmental impact is crucial, e.g. green technology. LCA could be one tool of usage for measuring and planning cleaner and reduced material need (Zutshi Ambika et al. 2004). Another benefit to apply to the audit performance is the cost benefit for the organisation due to the activities involved (Earnhart Dietrich et al. 2016). This could further lead to an increased resource productivity due to the EMS work (Montabon Frank et al. 2007). Furthermore, measure on factors for success regarding EMS work have shown that the possibility to decrease energy usage are scoring amongst the highest success benefits of organisations (Mavi Kiani Reza et al. 2012). The long-time planning of the EMS work is crucial for its possibility to fulfil improvements in an organisation, though the success is dependent on a continuous work with improvements on yearly basis, in organisations (Testa Francesco et al. 2008).

Tacit knowledge e.g. personal experience among employees, are a knowledge area which integrated in the environmental work could be of great benefit for the organisation. It could be made by finding spaces of idea-exchange within organisations where solutions to environmental dilemmas could use e.g. brainstorming from experiences and personal views of the employees as knowledge foundation to elaborate on the EMS work from (Olivier Boiral, 2002). Tacit knowledge further encourages the possibility for so called “custom-made” training in which the tacit knowledge of the organisation could be viewed and encouraged in the more static knowledge of environmental work (Olivier Boiral, 2002).

There are many reasons to that organisations choose to use environmental standards as a drive toward implementation of EMS work as well as many reasons why organisations choose to establish and perform EMS without linkage to environmental standards. The organisations that choose to start up EMS work by the wish for a standard can be called “compliance-oriented” while organisations without that wish as main influence can be called “improvement-oriented”. The later addressed are considered more internally motivated for change in the organisation and can by that motivation teach about the need for establishing a drive for change from within, organisations (Prajogo Daniel. 2019).

An overall reflection on the study is that the need for gathering of knowledge by e.g. case studies are highly relevant for having the possibility to grasp not only success benefits but also ideas about the varied perspectives on benefits related to the shape of organisations, and thereby getting a perspective on needed resources for a successful EMS and audit work.

Contact

For information about the Synergy Audit project and for start of a dialogue about EMS and audit performance please contact the leading organisation for the project on e-mail:

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