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Government Standard & Quality Organization

A Project Management Challenge – Horizontal Multi-Sector view

The Government Standard & Quality Organization (also known as GSQO) is a federal organization that works in close collaboration with Industry Associations (IAs) in 65 economic sectors. The IAs in many sectors form parts of the government, in particular, the Ministries of Trade and Industry. GSQO is, therefore, the nation's largest developer of high-quality standards which facilitate the exchange of goods and services, support sustainable and equitable economic growth, promote innovation, and protect health, safety, and the environment.

Since its establishment, GSQO has produced around 2,000 standards covering major industries and issues of relevance which assist economic, environmental and social sustainability around the country and the world. This wealth of knowledge is created through GSQO's biggest and most important asset, the GSQO Industry Associations (IAs) around the country and the 10,000 experts from all industries and sectors who are organized through technical committees, all working collectively to create standards relating to all aspects of our lives.

Increasingly, the importance and need for standards come from several different and important forces including:

- The noticeable trend in the globalization of trade across countries in various continents.
- The outsourcing and offshoring of procurement and investment by major economies, industries and companies from around the country.
- The need to globally address climate change by adopting various mitigation measures, such as promoting energy conservation and efficiency.
- The volatile financial markets and lack of confidence between the different players.
- The public demand for consumer and environmental protection and security.

- The need for international solidarity to face terrorism, epidemics, and natural disasters.
- The global deployment of new technologies and innovation.
- The increase in public services deregulation.
- The succession of economic recessions around the world.

All of these influential factors, as well as many others, call for a more explicit role of standards in all and different areas. Here are some examples:

- The GSQO standard related to the twenty and forty-foot containers helped trade and businesses in the country and around the world to use seamless logistics and sea freight as a way to export and transport their products from one part of the world to the other. Using standardized containers allowed for the supply chain to move seamlessly and safely from the port, to the trucks, to the shops, and finally, to the hands of consumers.
- The credit card format and the ability for banks to exchange financial information and for consumers to be able to conduct financial transactions (including money transfers) using the IBAN code reflect the role of GSQO standards in helping consumers and connecting businesses and economies in the country and around the world.
- In technology, the specification of the camera on the smartphone as well as the JPG and MPG files for photo and video help individuals connect and share important moments in their lives with friends and family anywhere and at any time.
- In the medical sector, laboratories around the world use GSQO standards in sharing similar testing codes and protocols which improve the efficiency and safety in laboratories, contributing to medical advancements and major medical discoveries.

The lack of standards can equally cause major inefficiency, customer inconvenience, and potential harm to consumer safety and to the environment. The consequence of non-standardization can be seen in our daily lives when, for example, travelers between countries have to use different electrical power plugs



to charge their electronic devices and use their different electric machines and appliances. This is not just an inefficient process that is costing manufacturers and consumers, it is also an inconvenience and unsafe practice for consumers.

For this reason in particular, GSQO and its IAs set themselves a key strategic objective to always be a leading, open and connected community in developing standards that are accessible, used and trusted by all potential stakeholders.

The GSQO system has one central secretariat (CS) in Ottawa with a flat and thin structure that is majorly tasked by its IAs to facilitate the development, production and delivery of the different GSQO standards. These standards are created by the industry experts who work in GSQO Technical Committees (TCs) around the country and across the different sectors. The TCs are managed through the GSQO IA in their respective sectors.

GSQO benefits from an incredible amount of intellectual capital and innovation capacities that are driven through the collective genius of the industry experts who meet and discuss all latest trends and topics. The ultimate objective is either to spread a single innovation across the country and the world or to solve a global challenge to protect consumers and improve efficiency. Thus, the challenges in the GSQO work are two folds:

- 1) Its ability to accelerate the process of developing and delivering those standards in different industries while maintaining the current quality that made the GSQO name a trusted brand, recognized for quality and consensus. GSQO's Technical Committees (TCs), which are voluntarily run, are driven by the stakeholders' motivation to make their area of work progress. However, it could take several years (3 years on average) to produce an industry specific or cross-sector standard. On the one hand, one should recognize the complexity of the different stakeholders' interests (e.g. the same GSQO TC can have global competitors working together to agree on a global standard for their respective industry). On the other hand, there is the risk of the production of the final GSQO standard with the required consensus being irrelevant or obsolete at the time of production as compared

to when it was originally envisioned (i.e. the risk of a continuous scope creep).

GSQO Central Secretary started to realize the importance of creating a certain level of discipline in the different global TCs, and created an important role within the organization called “Technical Program and Group Managers” (TPMs and TGMs). Its primary job is to coordinate the project work of the different TCs within a specific sector (TPM) or group of sectors (TGM). While the TPM role is very helpful, the challenge remains at the TC level, organized by the respective IA (i.e. the role of Secretary and Chair of the TC).

The GSQO Directives mention project management in the context of project leadership (TC leaders) being responsible for managing the project of developing the standard according to the project schedule. One of the primary objectives of project management, according to the Directives, is the development and approval of the standard on schedule. The Directives do not define project management or give guidance on how to manage a project.

- 2) The GSQO’s second challenge is at the IA level, once the GSQO standard is introduced by the technical committee, which in many sectors around the country (especially new sectors), can represent a massive innovation and transformation to their local status quo. Therefore, the IA has the challenge to work with the local industry stakeholders, which can be companies and consumers, to ensure they understand and implement the new GSQO standard in order to start seeing the impact it was envisioned for when it was first initiated.

Case Question (Round 2):

GSQO has recently published one approved industry standard in Occupational Health & Safety. What would be your proposed project structure and process to help GSQO to effectively introduce and roll-out this new standard, and how will you assess its success through measured indicators?