

Sustainable events? Absolutely.

The "planning a sustainable event" phase is followed by implementation. This includes forming a sustainability organization within the event companies and defining necessary operational processes. These are the focus of the third part of our publication series.

At the beginning, as always, we turn to the PDCA cycle:



What is behind the "Do" phase?

There are many aspects to be implemented in the operational implementation of a sustainable event. The most important requirements are as follows:

- ▶ there is a team that has the competence and resources to implement the project
- ▶ there is a sequence of operational steps that were defined during planning and are now being followed to meet the planned objectives
- ▶ documentation for specifications and evidence was created (more on this in Part IV).

In the beginning there is a team

DIN ISO 20121:2012 assigns a special role to top management: Only management can make the decision to move in the direction of sustainability in the core business. In this leading role, it must also ensure that the necessary resources are made available for this and define necessary new business rules.

In doing so, top management must ensure that responsibilities and authorities for relevant roles are assigned within the company and communicated internally. Appointing a responsible person or **sustainability management representative (NMB)** is necessary: to set up the new system, to develop it further over time, to ensure that sustainability goals are implemented according to plan, and to answer to the management.

In the ISO management world, this forms a kind of responsibility pyramid. The delegation principle only works in conjunction with reporting and control obligations: Management and NMB must work closely together to introduce rules, jointly agree on goals and implementation steps, and work out ways to improve sustainability-related performance in the future.



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A meeting structure follows the concern of the event organization: Meetings take place in different rotations, depending on whether it is about single, several or all events. It is advisable to record the meeting decisions in short minutes. The format should be adapted to structures commonly used for such purposes.

Especially at the beginning, it is important to give the person in charge the opportunity to develop competencies in the field through necessary training and to allow time for implementing the new organization.

What does process-oriented approach mean in the ISO world?

The core of ISO management systems is a transparent and thus controllable list of operational and management-relevant activities in **processes**. All defined steps that are necessary to obtain a certain desired result from the existing inputs are recorded and visualized for this purpose.

What sounds very theoretical at first glance, however, actually describes normal day-to-day business, as a sequence of usual prelude, planning, coordination, release and closing steps.

- ▶ On the one hand, this concerns the **operational processes, i.e. the** sequence in which the operational activities must be carried out: from the customer inquiry, through planning and coordination, to the organization and completion of the company's own services within the scope of the order.
 - The relevant operating processes also include the services provided by other companies in the value chain, which at the same time have a significant impact on the sustainability of the event (see practical example below).
- ▶ Furthermore, it is about defining **management processes, i.e.** defining who should do what for whom and when in controlling, implementing and monitoring operational activities so that Sustainable Event Management (NVMS) functions in accordance with standards. It is (as the name suggests) about the management rules that are defined and documented in detail.

Sustainable operating processes

Each type of event (conferences, congresses, concerts, civic festivals, exhibitions, decoration, etc.) has its own specifics in terms of the type of activity, complexity and the role of the organizers.

- ▶ If the event agency has a general contractor contract, it has potentially significant influence on the design and sustainability performance of individual subcontractors and on the overall event
- ▶ If the company is one of many service providers and suppliers within the contract, its influence is defined solely by its own range of services

Therefore, event types that are to be certified are defined as individual stand-alone processes within the framework of the NVMS. Here, it is essentially a matter of bringing together the conventional, controlling-oriented operating practices, i.e., of taking a close look at the project management existing in the company - from the kick-off to the closing steps - and supplementing each project step of the measures necessary from the NVMS point of view, for example by:

- ▶ the setting of sustainability targets
- ▶ the analysis of risks and opportunities among the interested parties involved
- ▶ the verification of legal conformity
- ▶ the planning and implementation of sustainability-relevant solutions



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- ▶ Measuring and monitoring the sustainability-relevant options in the implementation of events
- ▶ the evaluation of measurement and monitoring results
- ▶ the adoption of these results in the future planning of comparable formats.

Which operational processes need to be documented?

The standard creates a great deal of freedom for users with regard to the type and manner of documentation, because it must fit the company: if tabular Excel solutions are common in the business, these can be supplemented with the steps relevant to sustainability; if there are already process descriptions defined by other management systems as flowcharts, these can be taken as a basis and expanded.

The first content requirement of ISO 20121 for processes is to **record and document** planning and controlled management of **core processes** (the events that shape the business model).

If all services of a so-called full-service agency are to be certified, it is usually also all types of events (conferences, congresses, concerts, civic celebrations, exhibitions, decoration, etc.). If individual events or series of events are certified, these are documented as separate processes within the NVMS.

Processes that are **outsourced** (services provided by suppliers and service providers) but make a major contribution to achieving objectives must also be defined and documented. Whether for the entire company or for each individual event, such control is important both for general contractors and for smaller partial orders.

The second requirement for the documentation of operational processes is to collect and retain the evidence of scheduled implementation during regular operation so that the harmony of planning and

Practical example:

if catering is ordered externally, it must still be planned, coordinated and implemented according to the agency's own sustainability principles. To this end, the event agency defines the fields of action for sustainable catering (which in catering has an impact on profitability, environmental performance and society, see Part II). In a further step, goals and options are determined with regard to the range of food, beverages, and logistics and agreed accordingly with the service provider.

implementation can be traced by management and interested third parties (client, internal auditor, external certifier).

Management processes

ISO 20121 explicitly mentions **internal management regulations that** are required as documentation in order to be able to operate the system in compliance with ISO. Among other things, this involves the following:

- ▶ Creation of an internal organization, documentation and communication system
- ▶ Analysis of risks and opportunities of the involved interested parties
- ▶ an explicit check of legal conformity in the planning, organization and implementation of events



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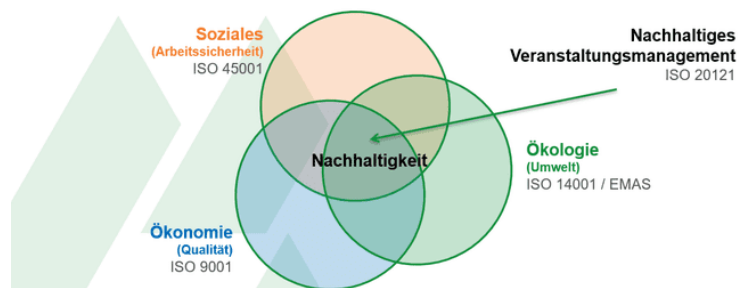
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Guide part 3

- ▶ Ensuring the necessary competence of responsible persons and employees
- ▶ Strategic and operational goal setting in the current context of the company
- ▶ Monitor, review and evaluate the progress and results of the events
- ▶ Striving for continuous improvement of one's own performance.

If the company already operates a quality management system in accordance with ISO 9001 (QMS) or an environmental management system in accordance with ISO 14001 (EMS), the operational and management processes relevant to customer satisfaction or environmental protection have already been defined: they form a solid basis for the processes in sustainability management. In this case, it is a matter of supplementing the steps or extending the QMS or EMS focus topics to all three pillars of sustainable development.

If the NVMS is introduced as the first ISO standard, creating the management rules is a demanding task that should not be underestimated in terms of time planning. However, there is a wide range of training courses, literature and consulting services available on the market that can be used to help you find your own way efficiently.



What are the benefits of defining processes?

- ▶ each process maps a sequence of actions and decisions, which creates an understanding among all participants of how the work is to be done
- ▶ each step includes various inputs (documents, decisions, database entries, invoices, etc.) and results. These are to be substantiated by the responsible persons by means of predefined evidence: In this way, the sustainability-relevant steps are continuously integrated into the day-to-day business
- ▶ The clear presentation of the activities as a sum of process steps facilitates the work (and familiarization) of the employees

It is best to fall back on the existing documentation culture, it grants more acceptance among those responsible. The only thing that counts when choosing the type of presentation is the transparency of the presentation of one's own processes.

Conclusion

The challenge of the process approach lies in precisely and transparently documenting the "processes lived everywhere" with all the associated steps. But it is worth it:

- ▶ Sustainability becomes an integral part of business processes
- ▶ Experience shows that the first ideas for optimizing the operating system already come up during the meeting and the first notes - the resulting transparency often works wonders!

In the next part of the publication series, we will highlight documentation as a building block of operational implementation. If you can't or don't want to wait for the publications in the series, feel free to attend our [seminar](#) on sustainable event management.

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