SYNOPSIS

Since the formal introduction of quality assurance to the construction industry by the government agency, Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) in 1991, there has been better interest shown by the construction companies to upgrade their quality system so as to deliver better quality construction works. A two-day conference, with the theme 'Managing Quality in the Construction Industry and International Competitiveness' was held then to bring professionals, academics and policy makers together to examine the issue of quality in the construction industry.

As the idea of ISO 9000 certification is relatively new to the construction industry, it is important to examine what have been done on the issue of quality system among the contractors in Singapore. Measures have been taken by the government agency, the CIDB, and the trade association (SCAL) to promote quality assurance among the contractors. Newsletters have been sent regularly to the contractors that are registered with CIDB, informing them on the issue of quality construction. Training courses have been arranged for the contractors, to assist them in the development of the quality system.
The CIDB also publishes guide books for the construction related firms to assist them in their quality system development. The guide book will provide the interpretation of the ISO 9002 requirements in relation to the construction industry.

There are about two hundred medium and large size contractors that are registered with CIDB. The survey interviews have shown that only about twenty percent of the contractors in Singapore were known to have started with the development of the quality system in accordance to the ISO 9002 requirements. Of these contractors, only a handful were known to be taking the initial step of registering with the certification body in Singapore, that is CIDB-SISIR, for pre-auditing.

This research also examines the problems faced by the contractors during their development of the quality system. The main problem lies within the attitude of the contractors and the other parties of the construction projects towards the requirement of the quality system. It was believed that the industry structure has much to do with the general lack of commitment by contractors. Also, there is generally a lack of trained personnel to really put the system into an effective and efficient working environment.
Despite the difficulties faced by the contractors in the development and implementation of the ISO quality system, the government agencies and most quality consultant believe that contractors should be able to achieve the ISO 9002 certification if more efforts are taken and more commitments are made. Like every other new phenomenon, it is often difficult to make a breakthrough before a true result can be seen.

Hence, it is believed that time will come before most contractors would actually be more active in the quality system certification. Thus, it can be concluded from this research paper that with sufficient time, effort and commitment, most medium and large size contractors would be able to attain the ISO 9002 certification.