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Service excellence — Implementation approach for ISO 23592

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Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 312, *Excellence in service*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Achieving service excellence is essential for organizations seeking to differentiate themselves in today's competitive marketplace. ISO 23592 defines the principles and provides a model for organizations to achieve outstanding customer experience and sustainable customer delight. Despite this International Standard, many organizations that want to implement service excellence do not know how to do so (see Figure 1). Research has shown that around 70 % to 75 % of all transformation programmes in companies fail (see, for example, References [8] and [9]). Specifically, in the context of service excellence, various obstacles stand in the way of a successful implementation, such as:

— insufficient understanding;

— fixed mindset;

— silo mentality;

— limited leadership support;

— resource constraints;

— lack of connection to business impact;

— dominance of product perspective;

— lack of cross-industry thinking;

— lack of transformation culture.

This document addresses these challenges by providing a practical approach to ensure a successful and sustainable implementation of service excellence. It offers guiding processes for leading change, with a strong emphasis on the pre-implementation phase, for organizations that have decided to implement and enhance service excellence based on ISO 23592. During this phase, organizations focus on unfreezing existing mindsets and creating a foundation for transformation. This involves addressing resistance, fostering a sense of urgency, building leadership support, and establishing a clear vision and strategic initiatives for service excellence.
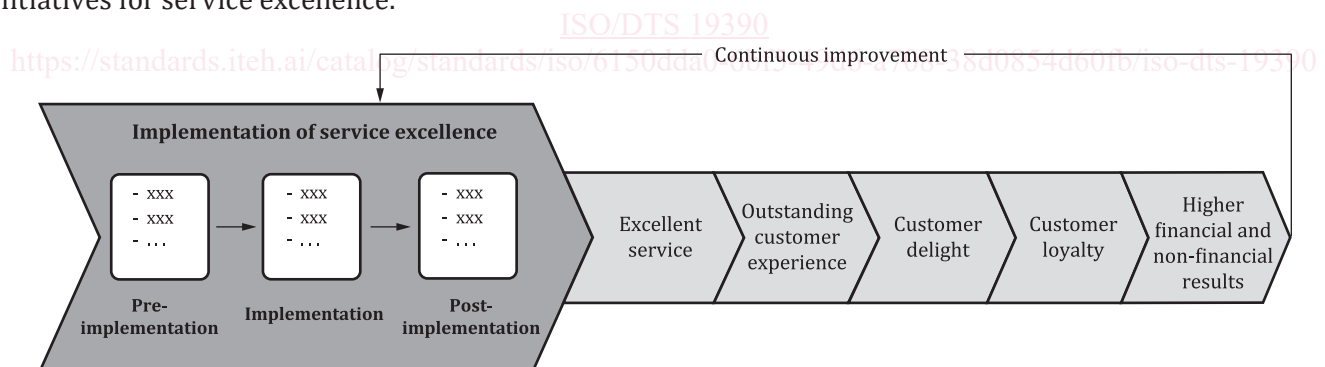
Figure 1 — Implementation approach as the starting point of the service excellence effect chain

ISO/TS 19387[1]) provides guidance for organizations on a methodology to assess the maturity of service excellence on five levels based on the service excellence maturity model (SEMM). SEMM helps the organization improve its service excellence or start to systematically implement service excellence based on ISO 23592. Considering this maturity model, implementation of service excellence targets the transition to good level (level 4) and excellent level (level 5) from managed level (level 3). The road to implementing service excellence will be long if customer orientation is not sufficiently managed and supported in the organization.

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1) Under preparation.

It should be considered that the change of the organization toward service excellence is complex and cannot be achieved with a one-off effort, since it is approached as a journey that involves multiple evolutionary initiatives over time. Thus, mature organizations manage the set of necessary initiatives under a change programme towards excellence (see ISO 21503) that aims to ensure that the expected benefits of the excellence are achieved. The change programme launches agile-incremental or waterfall projects (see ISO 21502) in order to achieve specific results. The change programme is integrated into the portfolio management to achieve the organization's strategic objectives and thus ensure that the necessary resources are allocated (see ISO 21504).

This document contributes to the field of service excellence by offering a structured implementation approach that bridges the gap between theory and practice. It provides organizations with clear guidance on how to navigate the complexities of service excellence, leveraging requirements and recommendations in ISO 23592 to create a customer-centric culture and drive sustainable improvements. By following the outlined processes and utilizing the SEMM, organizations can systematically assess their current maturity level, identify areas for improvement and implement targeted actions to enhance their service excellence capabilities. This comprehensive approach ensures that organizations not only achieve but also maintain a high standard of service excellence, leading to long-term success and customer delight.

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Service excellence — Implementation approach for ISO 23592

1 Scope

This document gives guidance to organizations on how to implement service excellence based on ISO 23592.

This document can be used in conjunction with ISO/TS 24082 and ISO/TS 23686.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 23592, *Service excellence — Principles and model*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 23592 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
change
improvement, *transition* (3.2) or *transformation* (3.3) of organizational processes, systems, structure or overall strategies

3.2
transition
process from one level of organizational capability to another

3.3
transformation
process of profound and radical *transition* (3.2) that orients an organization in a new direction and takes it to an entirely different level of effectiveness

[SOURCE: ISO 37500:2014, 3.23 modified — "radical transition" replaced "radical change". Note 1 to entry deleted.]

3.4
implementation
executing or applying specific plans, decisions, models, designs or policies to achieve predetermined objectives or realize envisioned *changes* (3.1)

3.5
implementation approach
strategic and structured methodology or plan designed for *implementation* (3.4)

3.6
minimum viable change
MVC
small success
small win
early success
early win
quick hit
smallest *change* ([3.1](#)) that can be implemented in an organization to achieve a significant impact or improvement

3.7
customer orientation
business approach that prioritizes customer needs in organizational processes, systems and communications at both the individual and organizational levels

4 Guiding processes of implementing service excellence

This document introduces an implementation approach of service excellence for organizations that have decided to implement and enhance service excellence based on ISO 23592. This approach is described as a guiding process of implementing service excellence, as shown in Figure 2. Various obstacles (e.g. insufficient understanding) stand in the way of a successful implementation of service excellence. Therefore, initiatives to introduce and implement service excellence should be accompanied by the concepts of change management and, where necessary, transformation.

NOTE 1   Organizations implementing service excellence through either change management or transformation can refer to ISO 21502, ISO 21503 and ISO 21504 for guidance on project, programme and portfolio management practices that can support their implementation journey.

NOTE 2   Figure 2 illustrates the fundamental process of service excellence implementation. While organizations can initiate new changes based on strategic needs, the figure intentionally maintains a linear progression, enabling organizations to focus on stabilizing and embedding changes in their culture and operations before starting new initiatives.

Key

●   recommended to use the specific result of a maturity assessment based on the service excellence maturity model (SEMM) in ISO/TS 19387
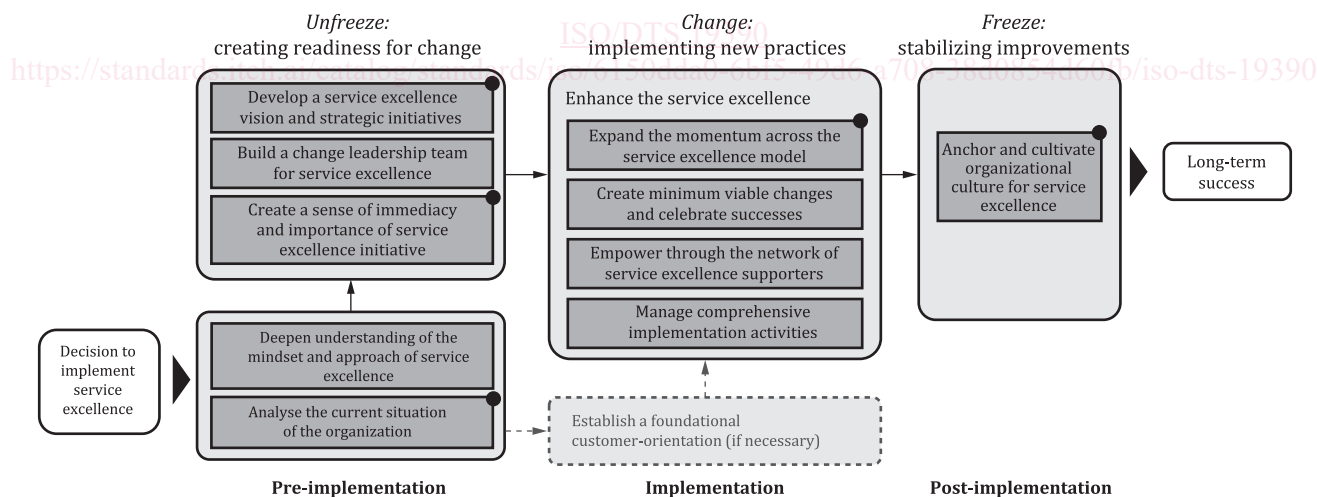
Figure 2 — Guiding processes of implementing service excellence

The implementation process is divided into three phases:

— pre-implementation;

— implementation;

— post-implementation.

This document incorporates the specific requirements and recommendations specified in ISO 23592 into these three phases to offer a comprehensive guide in alignment with ISO 23592. Annex A outlines this incorporation according to the elements (sub-elements) of service excellence model. The maturity assessment model for service excellence in ISO/TS 19387 is also utilized in this implementation approach.

These three phases correspond to the "unfreeze-change-freeze" framework[10][11], a foundational model for understanding and managing change within an organization, as follows:

— The "unfreeze" phase (pre-implementation) involves preparing the organization for change by creating awareness of the need to change and reducing resistance.

— The "change" phase (implementation) involves introducing and adopting new practices and behaviours.

— The "freeze" phase (post-implementation) focuses on stabilizing and reinforcing the changes until they become the organization's new normal.

The pre-implementation phase addresses the preparation and preconditions for the implementation of service excellence. This document proposes to initiate implementation activities of service excellence on the basis of the preparation, preconditions and foundational customer orientation.

In order to achieve service excellence in its entirety, the organization is encouraged to implement all nine elements of the ISO 23592 service excellence model. The organization should reach managed level (level 3) in SEMM to begin progress toward service excellence based on a foundational customer orientation. However, this process can also be achieved in stages by identifying and selecting isolated elements of the service excellence model. The organization can combine the use of the ISO 23592 and the SEMM in ISO/TS 19387 to evaluate its current status and maturity level. Following this, the actions required to achieve the next higher level are determined and implemented.

The post-implementation phase follows the activities that have been implemented. It incorporates new practices that lead to a stable and well-established corporate culture of service excellence.

5   Pre-implementation

5.1   General

Pre-implementation is the preparatory phase for change. It includes unfreezing the existing state, making the need for changes and the preconditions for them. The current situation analysis involves assessing the external environment, industry trends and internal challenges that necessitate change. It is important for the management of the organization to understand the differences between service excellence and other strategic approaches. The organization begins to work on developing required capabilities to achieve service excellence, as needed, after the initial assessment.

Concurrently or subsequently, the organization works on creating a sense of immediacy and importance for service excellence initiatives and building a leadership team by highlighting the reasons and opportunities for organizational change.

The organization works on establishing a clear service excellence vision and strategic initiatives aligned with the organization's objectives. This encompasses defining the desired future state, setting goals, prioritizing actions to guide the transformation journey and communicating all of these with employees.

5.2   Analyse the current situation of the organization and its context

To embark on a journey towards service excellence, it is imperative for organizations to gain an in-depth understanding of their current standing.

The organization should adopt suggestions from ISO 23592:2021, 7.2.2, 7.3.1, 7.4.1 and 7.4.2, regarding "employee surveys", "customer feedback", "benchmark", "customer journey mapping" and "performance indicators" to support the organization's investment in service excellence (see Annex A).

NOTE   Customer journey mapping is explained in detail in ISO/TS 24082.

For adequately analysing the situation, the organization should do the following:

a) Compare the existing standards and models that the organization adopts with the service excellence standards (e.g. ISO 23592).

b) Analyse customer feedback and market trends to identify big opportunities for service improvement, including:

    1) current competitor service offerings and standards;

    2) gaps between market standards and organization's service levels;

    3) customer expectations and needs;

    4) cross-industry service trends and best practices, ensuring that the organization stays ahead in today's competitive business environment.

c) Measure the current level of maturity in the organization using the maturity assessment model in ISO/TS 19387.

d) Review the current customer journey and feedback to identify pain points and areas of improvement in the customer experience. This process highlights touchpoints that need more attention or possible re-design, and promotes greater understanding of the customers' expectations and intensions.

e) Understand employee pain points, concerns, constraints and areas of improvement. This process identifies critical human touchpoints (i.e. frontline employees) to customers.

f) Assess employee engagement so that organizations can understand the level of commitment, enthusiasm and involvement of their employees, especially regarding customer-centric approaches. A dedicated and motivated workforce is key to delivering exceptional service.

g) Perform an analysis of potential obstacles (e.g. insufficient understanding) that can have a negative impact on the implementation of service excellence.

h) Identify and analyse specific services being provided, including:

    1) the specific nature and scope of each service;

    2) the value being delivered;

    3) service delivery channels;

    4) customer segments and beneficiaries;

    5) front-line processes visible to customers;

    6) supporting backend processes;

    7) tangible service elements (infrastructure, equipment, physical settings).

Appropriate practices for the above recommendations include the following:

— setting timelines for how regularly reviews should be conducted;

— understanding intangible experience using semi-structured interviews;

— visualizing and analysing the organization's activities, resources and goals (e.g. organization model canvas);