

EarthCheck Auditor Newsletter



EARTHCHECK

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The Role of the Relationship Manager

Each Relationship Manager (RM) takes care of their own regions and services members on an individual basis as well as aligned to annual certification schedules.

The RMs support members with assisting them with their annual benchmarking assessment and help them to get prepared for certification services. The RMs also help members to understand the EarthCheck software and address missing steps in terms of proceeding with the EarthCheck program. On a daily basis, the team gets in touch with the members either by phone or via email.

Technical questions, benchmarking clarification emails, payment reminders, congratulations emails and follow up emails are sent by the Relationship Management team to serve the needs of all members and hotel groups.

Below, Greta Tolksdorf, Relationship Manager



Welcome to the October edition of our newsletter for EarthCheck Auditors!

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with current auditor policies and protocols and to share stories and useful tips amongst our global network of EarthCheck Auditors.

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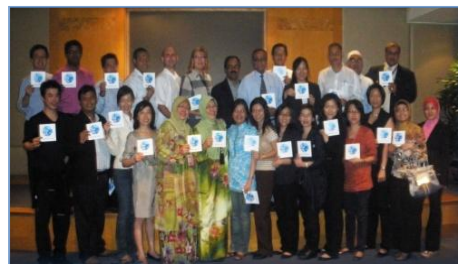
Thank you to all those who have contributed to the recent EarthCheck Auditor Newsletter!

We trust you find the enclosed reading both interesting and informative!

Best Regards,

The Relationship Management Team

EarthCheck Kuala Lumpur Training Event



In September 2010, EarthCheck held its inaugural Kuala Lumpur EarthCheck Auditor and Coordinator Training Workshop.

Sponsored by Sol Melia and EarthCheck Global Sponsor Ecolab, this event offered first-hand accounts of practical steps that are being undertaken by tourism market leaders throughout the South East Asia region. The EarthCheck Training Workshops present a unique opportunity to peek behind the scenes of some of the world's leading businesses, exchange ideas and assess the advantages of sustainable operational practices.

Among those attendees who have committed to the implementation of the EarthCheck programme to minimise their carbon footprint was representation from market leaders such as Taj, InterContinental Hotels Group, Starwood, ACCOR, Sol Melia, Centara and Alila, in addition to EarthCheck's auditing partners from the region: AJA EQS and SAI Global.

Over the five-day workshop, delegates obtained formal training on EarthCheck Benchmarking and Certification including the design and implementation of environmental and social management systems; compliant to the EarthCheck Company Standard.

The workshop served as a forum to hear from industry experts on examples about best practice in the fields of environmental and social sustainability. Among the speakers was Dr Lynne Olson of Ecolab, who addressed delegates on the management of chemicals, and the difference between 'green' or 'eco' and biodegradable products, which are verified to an international standard.

As part of the training event, delegates were invited to participate in a mock-audit of Silver Certified Holiday Inn Glenmarie and Gold Certified Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). Like many EarthCheck members, these organisations have experienced substantial cost savings in relation to the reduction of energy, water and waste by increasing their operational efficiencies.

EarthCheck's Certification Manager Ms Shey Parry says 'It was inspiring to see the calibre of delegates at our inaugural KL training event who believe that the planet deserves more than half measures. These EarthCheck training events provide an opportunity for professionals to come together and share learning's of both environmental and social sustainable practices specific to their individual region and scope of operations. With industry experts at hand to answer queries from delegates, EarthCheck training puts individuals in good stead for the sustainable management of their own operations and their organisations own triple bottom line objectives'.



EarthChecks Certification Manager, Ms Shey Parry presenting delegates with their Certificates

Icelandic Tales

By Kathy Colgan



I am an EarthCheck Auditor based in Canberra, Australia and enjoy my work for EarthCheck enormously. I have worked with EarthCheck as a Company and Community Auditor for 4 years now. When I am not working for EarthCheck I run my own consulting business primarily providing advice to the public and private sector in environment and sustainability matters. I have had the good fortune to travel to some interesting places to either conduct EarthCheck Auditor Training or undertake EarthCheck Audits.

Earlier this year I was asked to conduct a Community Audit in Iceland on the Snaesfellnes Peninsula primarily to up skill an Icelandic Auditor Haukur Haraldsson. Haukur and I had met in London the previous year where I had conducted an Auditor Training Course and he had undertaken both the Company and Community Auditor Training. As you may remember Iceland was firmly on the map earlier in the year due to the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano. At the time of my visit travel arrangements were somewhat precarious as the volcano was still active and I was never quite certain if I would get there or not. As it happened the airport at Reykjavik opened a few days before I was due to fly in. One of my enduring memories of Iceland is my first view of the landscape flying into Reykjavik. The plane passed to the South of Iceland to avoid the volcano which we could see smoking in the distance and then made a loop around to Reykjavik so we got a good look at the landscape. It was an amazing sight as volcanic activity is so prevalent the landscape looks like something out of a geomorphology textbook. I always had the feeling a dinosaur might

appear at any moment. Volcanic features which I had only ever seen in text books, volcanic plugs, lava plateaus, crater lakes were right there below us. Plenty of snow was still on the ground. I found the landscape fascinating so different from anywhere else I had been. Few trees, low vegetation stark and beautiful. really worth visiting quite unique.

Another enduring memory is the people, friendly warm and extremely hard working. Iceland has been hit hard by the Global Financial Crisis and one of the things that stood out for me was how the Community at Snaesfellnes were so committed to the EarthCheck Program. Money was very tight but they had made it a priority and were keeping their commitment to Sustainability in tact and not just mark time but move forward with new initiatives where they could. I spent 3 days with Haukur going around the Snaesfellnes Community which is made up of 5 townships and seeing how they have put the EarthCheck Community Standard into action. One of the things they make use of is Geothermal water for heating. The water is brought up from underground circulated around the township where it is used for heating and then returned to the ground.

In my work as an EarthCheck Auditor I have become a frequenter of Rubbish Tips and I have to say now I like visiting them! Iceland obviously has issues with rubbish disposal so strategies for recycling have become very important and I was taken to the Community Rubbish Tip to see how they were managing their recycling. One of the things that impressed me was how organised everything was and also how tidy. Because of the cold composting takes a while but they had a huge composting machine about the size of a container which had the capacity to turn large quantities of organic material and assist in speeding up the composting process.

If you have the chance put Iceland on your list of places to visit and particularly go to Snaesfellnes and see what this Community is doing to make their contribution to sustainability.

Submit Your Tale

All EarthCheck Auditors are invited to submit their tales and adventure. Please email expressions of interest to:

glenn.althor@earthcheck.org

Travelocity Expands with EarthCheck

Travelocity reports green hotel bookings in the first quarter were 65% higher than their non-green counterparts. And now the company has formed a relationship with EC3 Global—the world's largest certifier of sustainable travel and tourism organizations—to show consumers sustainable hotels throughout Asia-Pacific.

In this era of eco-confusion, Travelocity works hard to highlight earth-friendly hotels across its site and guards against green-washing with its rigorous program. Unlike some travel sites, Travelocity does not accept self-certified? hotels for the Green Hotel Directory.

It's important that our eco-friendly leaf icon in the hotel shopping path is a symbol consumers can trust, says Alison Presley, manager of Travelocity's Travel for Good program. There is no way to verify that a self-certified hotel is truly sustainable. And we know our consumers depend on us to hold the line against green-washing.

To date, Travelocity has flagged more than 1,900 hotels site-wide with the eco-friendly leaf and the company works with an elite group of certification programs. To have its hotels included in the Green Hotel Directory, a certification program must have a checklist that closely aligns with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

The criteria was developed by the Tourism Sustainability Council, a global coalition of U.N. bodies, research and academic institutions, social and environmental NGOs, certification programs, and it offers a comprehensive picture of what it means to be sustainable.



Conditional Certification



Conditional Certification may be recommended by an auditor whereby the organisation has demonstrated a strong commitment to the implementation of the Company Standard however Corrective Actions Requests (CAR's) raised require addressing.

This recommendation is made whereby essentially the organisation is deserving of Certification, however some issues require remedying prior to Certification being awarded.

Conditional Certification is to be recommended whereby 1 or more Major CAR has been raised, or a series of Minor CAR's raised.

In order to close these CAR's, the organisation must undergo a formal Progress Review within the specified timeframes (3 months is the general rule) by submitting supporting evidence to EarthCheck.

EarthCheck will then appoint an approved auditor to carry out the Progress Review, which is conducted offsite. In some instances it may involve an onsite surveillance visit if there are areas of concern.

An organisation is not awarded a Certified logo until they have successfully passed their Progress Review. If the member fails the Progress Review, they will be required to re-apply for Certification Services as per the regional schedule.

'Next Audit' Recommended

The integrity of the Offsite Certification Assessment process is maintained through follow up Onsite Certification Audits (within two years of the initial Offsite Certification Assessment) and the requirement for every certified organisation to have an audit at least every two years thereafter.

Next audit recommendations are provided by the approved EarthCheck Auditor following the delivery of Certification Services. These recommendations are then reviewed and if justifiable, authorised by EarthCheck.

The provision of Certification Services for any organisation is always subject to the individual property's size, scope, risk and previous audit findings.

Whilst a low risk hotel that performs very well during their audit may be recommended to undergo an Onsite Certification Audit in 2 years time, for those who have received major non conformances or whereby there is a concern as to potential risk identified, an Onsite Certification Audit is likely to be recommended to occur sooner.

As a general rule, high risk organisations or those that have been awarded a Major Corrective Action Request are to be audited annually. Low risk organisations and those with no Major Corrective Action Requests can be audited up to every 2 years as per EarthChecks regional schedule for Certification Services.



Auditing Continual Improvement



How much improvement is "enough"?

It should be emphasised that the requirement is for continual improvement of the effectiveness of the Management System. Continual improvement emanates from the objectives set by top management, which should (at least) address: the improvement of internal efficiency (for the organization to remain economically competitive), individual customer needs, and the level of performance that the market normally expects.

For example, in the aeronautical sector, the "acceptable rate" of non-conforming delivered product is zero percent, so it would not be useful for the organization to set objectives for an "improvement" in this rate. However, it would be useful for the organization to have objectives aimed in improving its internal efficiency and its competitiveness (e.g. through innovation).

The auditor should seek to determine if the auditee has attempted to set objectives that establish the correlation between the 3 factors of: corporate objectives, customer needs, and market expectations. Thereafter, it is up to the organization to balance the need for improving internal efficiency and the need to progress with external performance (although the two are very often closely related). No one in isolation can ever be considered as being "enough" or "not enough".

One area which can be problematic for the auditor to know is what a reasonable market benchmark is. Continuing the above aeronautical example, if the organization

announced that it had improved from a level of 50% non-conforming product delivered to 40%, this would demonstrate continual improvement, but would hardly be acceptable, given the industry sector's zero percent normal rate. However, if it announced that it had set an objective to improve its performance from 0.50% to 0.40%, this would be much nearer the market norm.

The only real solution for the auditor is to verify how the organization has determined this proposed rate of improvement, how it has evaluated the associated risks, and how this relates to customer requirements and the monitoring of feedback on customer satisfaction.

It would be almost impossible to issue an NCR that stated "There was not enough continual improvement".

What sort of information is relevant and where can we find it?

The auditor has to verify how the overall corporate objectives have been translated into internal requirements throughout the appropriate processes, and how these requirements are communicated and monitored. So, the auditor should look for evidence that the organization is analysing data from process monitoring, and is then taking the results forward for evaluating process efficiency and/or improving process output. One point that should be specifically examined is the consistency of the way in which the improvement of any one process contributes to meeting the overall objectives, in order to ensure that this will not cause conflict in the achievement of other objectives.

The type of information that an auditor needs to look for, is evidence of how the corporate objectives are translated into specific QMS objectives. For example: an organization could set an objective to reduce customer complains by 30%. The top management analysis shows that 50% of the complaints concern overdue deliveries. The auditor should then look for evidence that the organization is monitoring and analysing key aspects of its

scheduling and planning activities, throughout its processes, and the process interfaces, to reduce delays.

Improvement of the process or improvement of the QMS?

An auditor should remember that it would be unrealistic to expect an organization to make progress all potential improvements simultaneously. Each improvement will require the commitment of resources, which may need prioritisation by top management, especially where investments are needed. Instead, the auditor should seek to ensure that the improvement objectives are consistent overall, and are coherent with the trilogy of factors mentioned above. However, an organization that does not have a policy and objectives relating to continual improvement is clearly not complying with the standard. Similarly, the absence of any evidence of improvement on at least one of these aspects would have to be considered as indicating that an organization's quality policy is not in line with ISO 9001.

One word of warning: There is no requirement that the organization should set objectives for improvement of all its processes at any one time. As in the above example on reducing customer complaints, some processes may not be deemed by top management to contribute significantly to the reduction of delays, and it is only normal therefore, that the organization would not concentrate on these areas.

If the top management has set a (realistic) objective for a process, and there is no evidence of improvement, this information must be fed back into the management review so that top management can decide what type of action is appropriate - for example, re-adjusting the objective or providing other means to impact on the process.

The ISO 9001 Auditing Practices Group is an informal group of quality management system experts, auditors and practitioners drawn from the ISO Technical Committee 176 quality management and quality assurance (ISO/TC 176).

Benchmarking Data Verification



Verification documents are required for during Onsite Certification Audits only as this is not verified during the initial Offsite Certification Assessment.

1) Activity Measure: If a formula was used to calculate your activity measure (eg Guest Nights per annum as a combination of overnight stays and day visitors, or Revenue Passenger Kilometres assessed from distance travelled and number of passengers), a breakdown of the calculation should be provided, including itemising each figure used.

If a formula was not used (eg the activity measure is the area under roof, or there were only overnight guests used in the guest nights calculation), then this requirement can be ignored.

2) Energy Consumption: The documents needed for this indicator will be those that clearly state how much electricity was consumed, and if applicable, those that record consumption of gasoline, diesel, LPG, and any other energy sources consumed, throughout the entire Benchmarking period. This can include copies of electricity bills and/or meter readings as well as bills for other energy sources. As it is only the amount of energy used that will be verified, financial data, such as the price paid, can be omitted or deleted.

3) Water Consumption: The documents needed for this indicator will be those that clearly state how much water was consumed throughout the entire Benchmarking period. This can include copies of water bills and/or meter readings. As it is only the amount of water used that will be verified, financial data, such as the price paid, can be omitted or deleted.

The information required for item 1, can be provided as a simple typed document and sent by email to your Benchmarking assessment contact.

For items 2 and 3, electricity and water bills (preferably with any pricing information blacked out) and any other hard copy documents can be either scanned and emailed, or photocopied and faxed or posted to the EarthCheck Office.

NOTE: For all Certification Audits, Organisations are required to provide evidence for the calculation of the activity measure and ALL relevant Sector Benchmarking Indicators. This information must be documented and made available to the Auditor for review during the Certification Audit.

Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort



The environmental practices of Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort have been recognized by EarthCheck; the world's leading sustainable travel and tourism certification organization.

The EarthCheck Program is widely regarded as the world's most scientifically rigorous, and is focused on maximizing operational efficiencies to minimize CO2e emissions, while supporting host communities. It looks at key environmental indicators such as energy and water consumption, total waste production as well as community commitment, to determine the level of performance.

Only those organizations that can consistently demonstrate operational practices that adhere to the highest environmental standards over a period of 10 years, receive the much-coveted Platinum Certification.

"It is very important to us to keep finding ways to preserve the environment as much as possible, not only for our guests, but more importantly for the future generations of Aruba. We have been committed to this cause throughout the organization from the start and hope to continue to set an example for other resorts, organizations, and the Aruban community in general," according to Jurgen van Schaijk, the Managing Director of Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort.

Prior to achieving Certification, Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort successfully benchmarked and certified its operations each year, using the EarthCheck tool. This involved the organization submitting a year's worth of operational data, and having it compared to that of other organizations that are similar in kind.

"I congratulate Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort in their achievement of EarthCheck Certified Platinum status," says Stewart Moore, CEO of EC3 Global.

"Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort is one of less than a handful of organizations in the world to have achieved this and should be viewed as a leader in the field of sustainable tourism".