

PLANNING

Clause Six

What is meant by Planning?

This clause requires actions to address risks and opportunities, the establishment of quality objectives, and the planning of any changes to maintain the integrity of the management system.

Find out more in our online training module [Objectives and Improvement](#).

Complying with Planning

Objectives

Objectives set out what your business is trying to achieve and should be monitored and updated on an ongoing basis. They should be aligned with your Quality Policy and relevant to the conformity of your products and/or services.

Objectives may be set at various levels of the organisation, from top management to individuals and departments to project teams.

When setting objectives, you should use the SMART acronym to ensure your objectives are clear and reachable:



- **Specific:** Outline in a clear statement exactly what is required. Be precise, not vague in what you want to achieve.
- **Measurable:** How are you going to know if this has been achieved? Include a measure to enable you to monitor progress.
- **Achievable:** Whilst your objectives should be challenging, they shouldn't be designed for failure. Be realistic in what you can achieve and by when.
- **Relevant:** Focus on the outcome and whether its relevant to what the organisation and/or team need to achieve. Don't set objectives for the sake of it, they must be of benefit.
- **Time Based:** Agree a completion date.

Example: To improve the validity of customer satisfaction data by improving the response rate from 55% to 75% by Q4.

Action plans should be set to indicate what will be done to achieve the objective and owners to the action plans allocated.

Tip: when you're provided with recommendations following your annual audit and/or support meeting, set these actions as objectives.

Risk and Opportunities

Every business is directly impacted by several factors which are either described as risks or opportunities. If you've already completed 'Context of the Organisation', which requires you to consider internal and external issues that may have an impact on your operations, then it might be clear what your potential risks and opportunities are.

Applying the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle allows you to be more proactive in dealing with any risks and opportunities that may arise so you can put relevant measures in place to prepare. Planning in this way therefore reduces the negative impact on your business, ensuring you continue to meet the needs and expectations of your interested parties.

The cycle is closed by assessing how effective the measures were, using this as evidence towards any future planning activities.

Learn how to identify your organisation's risks and opportunities in our online module [Risk-Based Thinking](#).

Remember These Key Elements:



Next Steps:

1. Sign up to our online training modules [Objectives and Improvement](#) and [Risk-Based Thinking](#) to learn more.