

# The 5 whys of ISO/IEC 17025





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As any accredited lab will know, understanding ISO/IEC 17025 is a critical part of how your lab operates.

From developing your quality manual to sending out reports to your customers, the process is clearly defined, simple to follow and easy to implement. Right?

Well...judging by the number of 'help with ISO/IEC 17025 courses' available, maybe not.

The standard was updated in 2017 with a few key changes which we won't go into here. Suffice to say, its structure is now more in line with other ISO standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 15189.

But why do labs need to follow this standard anyway? Here's 5 whys for you to ponder.

### ***Why 1: It shows your lab is competent***

This is the biggie.

Labs use ISO/IEC 17025 to implement a quality management system (QMS), with the goal of improving their ability to produce consistently valid and reliable results.

If you follow the requirements of the Standard, you'll have only trained, skilled and authorised staff performing lab tasks. Those staff members must prove they know how to follow procedures, perform testing or calibration activities correctly in spite of any errors or omissions in documented procedures, and handle any problems that may arise.

If all the processes inside the laboratory are managed and validated, then the reputation of your lab will be intact and of course, sustainable.

### ***Why 2: It shows your lab is professional***

Having a standard in place in your lab means you've gone that extra mile. You're not just satisfied with the status quo. You have an ordered system with clear job responsibilities. Your lab has established policies, procedures and work rules which means that company expectations are being fulfilled.

It also means that company management has a method of tracking progress and reducing risk. This transparency increases the chances of the company maintaining a competitive edge and demonstrates a commitment to ongoing improvement.

### ***Why 3: It shows you put the customer first***

One of the changes in the 2017 update was the need to keep the customer in mind. Obviously, labs consider their customers and their needs. However, the standard wants labs to ensure customer needs are kept front of mind throughout the testing process.



Customers should have an expectation of confidentiality and an option to express any concerns they may have about the lab's work. The lab must also confirm that it takes these concerns seriously and will investigate any issues, keeping the customer informed of the progress and outcome.

Building trust with the customer through excellent service and prompt feedback doesn't just make sense for labs. It makes good sense for all businesses.

#### ***Why 4: It shows your lab is reliable***

A lab submits reports to customers who then use the results as the basis for a decision. However, the customer wants to be sure that the results they receive are consistent and repeatable.

There is natural variation in results due to the nature of testing and controls are put in place by your lab to reduce this range of variation. Evaluation of the measurement uncertainty is done to support the validity of your results and provide information on this 'natural variation'. Sometimes this information is provided in the final report. This additional level of detail demonstrates your lab's capacity to detect and evaluate errors and adds relevance to your reporting.

Reliability also means being able to deliver on promises. If a customer requires a particular turn around time for their test and the lab knows they can't meet this, the customer should be advised immediately.

Providing prompt, honest, and transparent communication adds to a lab's reputation for reliability.

#### ***Why 5: You can't get accreditation without it***

Accreditation by a third party such as NATA is your guarantee to customers that your lab offers competent, professional testing services. However, accreditation is based on relevant standards including ISO/IEC 17025. So, if you're seeking to demonstrate that extra level of competence, then aligning your lab's systems to the standard is the only way to go.

#### ***Does this sound difficult?***

We understand that complying with the standard can be a bit of a process. That's why we've developed a one-day course called **ISO/IEC 17025 Unpacked**.

We'll help you unwrap any issues you may have with particular clauses of the standard and explain how to implement them in clear, simple language.

Read more about this course on our [website](#), email [info@masmanagementsystems.com.au](mailto:info@masmanagementsystems.com.au) or phone Maree on 0411 540 709.

***You don't have to do this alone!***