The industry is currently going through a period of transition, as bandwidth prices are falling, new players are entering the business and the range of services offered is expanding. As a result of all of this change, and in order to stay competitive, the suppliers in the industry are becoming much more customer focused. For example, SES which for many years has been putting on “Industry Days” for its customers, where they are invited to come together and learn about the latest technologies; has recently taken this customer focus one step further, and appointed a Chief Services Officer (CSO). The remit of the CSO is to lead a single team charged with delivering exceptional services to SES’ Network and Video Division’s customers.

Another example would be teleport operators, who these days rarely sell bandwidth. Instead they sell a total package of managed services, providing a complete end to end service, including integration with terrestrial networks when needed. This not only simplifies things for the customer, by giving them “one throat to choke,” a single point of contact, in what can be a very complex network, involving multiple vendors and technologies; it also provides a degree of “stickiness” for customer retention.

For an equipment manufacturer a different approach is needed to demonstrate this focus on the customer. One approach that is being adopted by some companies, is obtaining ISO 9001:2015 certification. This is an internationally recognized quality standard.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) was founded in 1947 and is an independent, non-governmental organization (NGO). It is comprised of the standards organizations of the 164 member countries. It was established to help ensure that companies engaged in the design, development, manufacture, installation and service of any type of product, consistently meet international best practices and applicable regulatory requirements for quality management. The certifications can also be awarded to companies that have an internal system for measurement that is directed toward meeting and exceeding customer needs and expectations.

The ISO facilitates world trade by providing common international standards, recognized by all member countries. Being a global industry, this is something that is particularly important for the satellite industry.

ISO 9001 is hardly new, it was first published in 1987, however it is regularly updated, to ensure that it remains relevant in the prevailing business climate. The standard sets out the requirements for a quality management system. The latest iteration was published in 2015. This revision takes into account the escalation in globalization and international trade, and the resulting complexity of supply chains. Increased access to information, has raised customer expectations, and frequently those of other interested parties as well. So, this revision incorporates elements such as a
stronger focus on stakeholders
in the wider context of an organ-
ization, so as to fit the evolving
needs of modern business.

The standard is designed to be
flexible enough for use by different
types of organizations. Therefore, it does not specify what the
objectives relating to “quality” or
“meeting customer needs” should be. Instead, it requires organi-
zations to define these objectives
themselves and focus on continu-
ous improvement of processes in
order to reach them.

ISO 9001:2015 is based on
seven quality management prin-
ciples [QMPs]. These principles
are a set of fundamental rules,
beliefs, norms and values, that
are accepted as true and used as
the basis for quality management.
These, seven quality management
principles are:

- Customer focus
- Leadership
- Engagement of people
- Process approach
- Improvement
- Evidence-based decision
  making
- Relationship management

Use of the standards helps
in the creation of products and
services that are safe, reliable and
of good quality. Applying these
standards help businesses increase
productivity while minimizing
errors and waste. The standards
can also help a company enter
a new market, as any company
with the certification, is instantly
recognized as one adhering to
high standards, with a customer
focus and one whose products
reach internationally recognized
standards.

Although the standard is not
specifically targeted to the satellite
industry, it nevertheless highly
applicable and has been embraced
by many companies. It gives
customers the knowledge that a
company having this prestigious
certification, is one that maintains
high standards not only in its
operating procedures but also in
its service to its customers.

Comtech Xicom, one of the
world’s leading suppliers satellite
uplink power amplifiers, is one
such company that has embraced
ISO 9001:2015. Comtech Xi-
com’s amplifiers are used by the
military, and many commercial
industries including broadcast,
maritime, aeronautical, DTH and
Satellite News Gathering (SNG) to
name but a few. All of these have
come to rely on Comtech Xicom’s
focus on quality management.

ISO 9001:2015 Certified Ground Equipment Products

Santa Clara, California-based Comtech Xicom Technology provides a broad product line of KPAs, TWTAs, SSPAs and
BUCs for worldwide satellite uplink covering C-, X-, Ku-, DBS-, Ka-, Q-band, Tri- and Multiband with power levels from
8 to 3,550 watts and available in rack-mount and antenna-mount ODU packages. Their products use the ISO process
for development and production. Among the ISO certified products are its
newly launched series of X-band solid-state power amplifiers (SSPAs) and block
upconverters (BUCs).

The XTSLIN-25X, XTSLIN-80X, XTSLIN-150X and XTSLIN-250X lines of linear
power X-band amplifiers provide the highest linear power density solutions
available while drawing very low prime power and operating in the toughest
environments. These units are designed to meet all RF requirements in chal-
lenging X-band networks, including Wideband Global Satellite requirements
and support for multi-carrier systems. X-band is one of the most difficult
satellite communications bands to operate in because the transmit and receive bands are directly adjacent. Xicom’s
proprietary very-low leakage designs ensure that any transmit noise or spurious signals in the receive band is atten-
uated and contained to avoid disruption of the received signal, enabling multi-carrier operation with low Passive In-
termodulation (“PIM”) antennas. These X-band SSPAs are all offered with optional built-in upconverters; with a range
of monitor and control interfaces including SNMP; and options for redundancy or output power combining. The
compact size and high efficiency of these units provide unparalleled linear power density, achieving 25W of linear
output power (using MIL-STD-188-164 definition) with a 5.3 lb. package; and 150W linear output power with a 32 lb.
package. These units operate air-cooled in -40C to +60C temperatures and meet stringent outdoor environmental
requirements per MIL-STD-810G.
For any company, customer satisfaction is not only a key performance indicator, it is also the driver for growth, letting customers know that you have this certification is a major factor in ensuring that satisfaction. As Mark Schmeichel, VP and General Manager, says: “At Xicom, we recognize that this achievement is not a standalone one. Through being certified to ISO 9001:2015 and complying with its guidelines and strategies, Comtech Xicom has linked customer satisfaction with technological prowess and quality management systems measurement, monitoring and improvements, to ensure new and existing products are developed and maintained in a consistent and focused structure.”

Earning ISO 9001:2015 certification has resulted in the development of improved production processes and better operational efficiencies. Existing risk procedures and processes have also been strengthened through the certification process. The focus on quality and and the streamlining of the development and production process has been a win-win situation. For Comtech Xicom it has resulted in consistent growth and innovation, as well as operating efficiencies. For the customers, it has resulted in improved relationship with Xicom, quality products and consistent innovation.

As well being an ISO 9001:2015 certified engineering and manufacturing organization, most of Comtech Xicom’s amplifiers are compliant with European CE-Mark requirements. Xicom is also WEEE compliant.

Other companies in the satellite industry that also have ISO 9001:2015 certification. It’s an important benchmark in evaluating equipment providers. In an increasingly competitive environment, having ISO certification shows that a company is committed to high quality standards.

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