A White Paper

HDI Support Center Certification

and

ISO 9000 Quality Management Principles:

Complementary Approaches

OPTIMAL CONNECTIONS

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The Global Economy

Thanks to the Internet, the world is shrinking as never before. Businesses are expanding their market reach, courting new markets. Competition is occurring on a global scale. In order to thrive, organizations in today's global economy are seeking to hone their business practices - to become as competitive as possible.
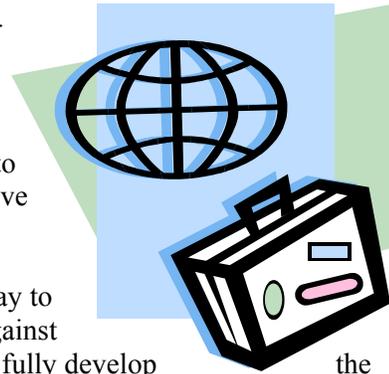
Leading organizations are discovering that the best way to achieve this is to audit the practices of the business against "best practice" standards, and engage in a program to fully develop the assets of the organization – its people, processes and infrastructure. The goal: optimize the assets of the organization, so that it can be as adaptive, progressive and in tune with its marketplace – and customers – as possible.

The benefit to achieving best practices: an organization that has a heightened ability to fulfill its mission, achieve its goals, retain its customers, and expand to compete effectively in a global marketplace.

A Quick Overview

The ISO 9000 standards were created by the International Standards Organization with the intent of providing high level standards of business practice for the entire organization. ISO 9000 Principles have been extended into specific revisions of the ISO Standards – ISO 9001, 9002, etc. Audit procedures and certification are available for the several revisions of the program, and enterprises that seek compliance with "best practices" engage in activities to have their enterprises ISO certified.

HDI's Support Center Certification (SCC) program, by comparison, was created by the Help Desk Institute with the intent of providing "best practice" standards specific to a support organization within the enterprise – whether the company "help desk" or "customer support center". The model, elements and standards were created to be compatible with ISO, the Malcolm Baldrige standards, and the European Framework for Quality Management, and are specifically designed to assist with the evaluation and enhancement of support organizations.

So the relationship between the two standards is complementary. ISO standards, on the one hand, are more general, and can be used to measure and evaluate process, procedure and systems in a variety of departments across an organization – from research and development, to manufacturing, to sales and marketing. HDI Support Center Certification standards are support specific, extending "best practice" standards to the realm of the help desk and customer support center.

ISO Principles and the HDI Model

1. ISO's "Customer Focus" Principle and HDI's "Customer Satisfaction"

ISO Principle #1 is all about achieving "customer focus" in the enterprise. Since organizations depend on their customers, they should strive to truly understand current and future customer needs, meet requirements and exceed expectations. The ISO principle encourages the organization to find ways to enhance its processes, systems and resources to better understand its customers, in order to better meet requirements and exceed expectations.

HDI's SCC program supports this ISO principle in that higher levels of customer satisfaction are a natural outcome of applying the HDI model. Customer Satisfaction, one of the three HDI "Results Factors", is a natural outcome of optimizing the "Enabling Factors" in a support organization. HDI's premise is that high levels of customer satisfaction only occur when you have focus on and optimization of the various enabling factors that are at the heart and soul of a support organization. Only then can the foundation be laid for realizing high levels of customer satisfaction – in addition to enhanced people satisfaction and performance results.

Let's examine more precisely how the SCC model supports this ISO principle:

1. ISO stipulates that the organization "research and understand customer needs and expectations". HDI's SCC program brings this into a support context, mandating that customer satisfactions surveys, both "event-based" and "periodic", be conducted on a systematic basis to determine these needs and the level of satisfaction.

2. ISO mandates that the objectives of the organization be "linked to customer needs and expectations". HDI's SCC program supports this notion by specifying that Leadership – one of the 5 "Enabling Factors" in the HDI model – set a firm foundation for achieving customer satisfaction. The strategy, goals and objectives of the enterprise must be linked to and recognize the value and importance of support. Only by recognizing the importance of supporting the customer can the organization as a whole meet the needs and expectations of customers.

3. ISO stresses that customer needs and expectations should be "communicated throughout the organization". HDI's SCC program gets support center specific, providing guidelines concerning how customer satisfaction survey results should be recorded, communicated and acted upon throughout the organization.

4. ISO also emphasizes the need to measure customer satisfaction and act on the results. HDI's SCC program translates this into the support environment, requiring both event-based and periodic customer satisfaction measurements.

Also required are staff and management distribution lists, to confirm effective communication of results and requests for action plans.

5. The ISO principle sets a standard for systematically managing customer relationships – in other words, a systematic process should be in place to periodically and regularly meet with customers, assess the state of the relationship, identify opportunities for improvement and unmet needs, and outline a plan for further action. HDI's program extends this principle to the support environment, requiring effective collaboration between the support function and its customers.

6. Finally, this ISO principle requires a "balanced approach" be undertaken – so that actions to satisfy customers do not unduly impact other important organization parties or processes. The HDI model, by its very design, supports this principle. The five "Enabling Factors" must be properly provided for in order to realize the benefits of the three "Results Factors". And all the elements must be in balance and adequately addressed in order to realize an optimal support environment.

Once this is achieved, an organization begins to harvest the following benefits:

- Increased revenue and market share
- More effective use of the organization's resources
- Improved customer loyalty leading to higher levels of repeat business

2. ISO and HDI on Leadership
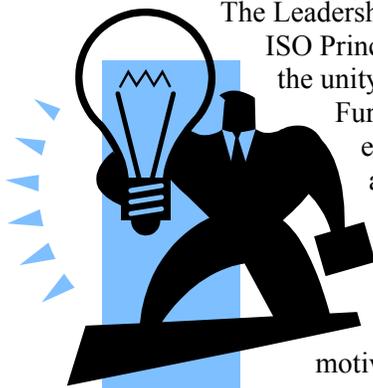
The Leadership element in HDI's SCC model is very consistent with the ISO Principle 2 of Leadership. ISO maintains that "leaders establish the unity of purpose and direction of the organization." Furthermore, "they should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organization's objectives".

The Leadership Element in the SCC model is very closely aligned and supportive of this principle. The HDI model stresses that "leadership defines how managers…guide their organizations toward success through inspiring and motivating employees".

Here are the specifics on how the HDI model complements the ISO Leadership principle:

1. ISO stresses the need to "consider the needs of all interested parties". It encourages leadership to provide "people with the required resources, training and freedom to act with responsibility and accountability." The HDI model agrees with this notion, stressing that Leadership needs to "determine resource requirements, priorities and priority issues, inspiring an environment of cooperation."

2. The ISO principle maintains that Leadership needs to "establish a clear vision of the organization's future". It must also "set challenging goals and targets."

HDI's element echo's this requirement by stating Leadership must ensure that "statement of purpose are communicated and understood throughout the organization. Mission, vision, goals and objectives must clearly and effectively support the business purpose of the larger enterprise."

3. The ISO principle also stresses the need for "creating and sustaining shared values, fairness and ethical role models at all levels in the organization." HDI's SCC model supports this notion of fairness and shared values by stressing that Leadership must foster "meaningful teamwork, resolving communication issues..."

4. The two models also agree on Leadership's role concerning encouragement. The ISO principle states that Leadership be "inspiring, encouraging and recognizing people's contributions". HDI's Leadership element embodies this very same notion, stating that Leadership must "provide highly visible support and encouragement."

When leadership in the support organization embodies this principle, the following benefits will be realized:

- People will understand and be motivated toward achieving the organizations goals and objectives.
- Support activities will be evaluated, aligned and implemented in a manner consistent with the larger enterprise.
- Not only will instances of miscommunication be minimized, but systems and processes will be put in place to help ensure a higher level of quality communication.

3. ISO's "Involvement of People" and HDI's "People Management"

ISO's third principle stresses the importance of people to the success of the enterprise – that people at all levels are the essence of the organization, and that "their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organization's benefit."

HDI's People Management element supports this principle by stating that support management is responsible for "the creation of an environment that motivates people to perform at their peak."

Let's review how HDI's SCC program supports this ISO principle:

1. Both ISO and HDI's SCC model stress that people need to understand their role and opportunity for contribution. ISO makes this case by requiring that people in the organization understand their contribution and role. Like ISO, HDI's SCC model also states that "personnel should understand why their job is important." The SCC model then makes this support specific by stipulating that "staff roles and responsibilities, as well as support processes must be well documented." When job descriptions are clearly documented, maintained and communicated, understanding and contribution obviously benefits.

2. HDI's SCC model elaborates on the ISO principle by maintaining that people should not only understand their job and why it is important, but also "receive satisfaction from their work." Employees that know their role, make their mark, and receive recognition for their contribution tend to be more satisfied – and more productive. In the final analysis, the employee and the organization benefit.

3. The ISO principle also maintains that people accept ownership of problems and the responsibility for solving them. Furthermore, that people should evaluate their performance against their personal goals and objectives. HDI's People Management element supports this principle by maintaining that support management provide their team with "an environment that motivates people to perform at their peak", as well as "meaningful performance feedback" to help motivate employees.

4. According to ISO, people should be "actively seeking opportunities to enhance their competence, knowledge and experience". HDI's People Management element supports this principle of personal involvement by stressing that management provide "opportunities for technical and professional growth", as these are proven motivators.

5. Finally, ISO stresses that people should be "openly discussing problems and issues". HDI's SCC program also encourages open communication – the People Management element requires that "strong corporate communication" be in place so that employees can discuss and deal with issues of common concern.

When organizations implement the principle of involvement of people, supported by the HDI SCC model, they will typically experience:

- Motivated, committed and involved people within the organization
- Innovation and creativity in furthering the organization's objectives
- People being accountable for their own performance
- People eager to participate in and contribute to continual improvement

4. ISO's "Process Approach" and HDI's "Process and Procedure"
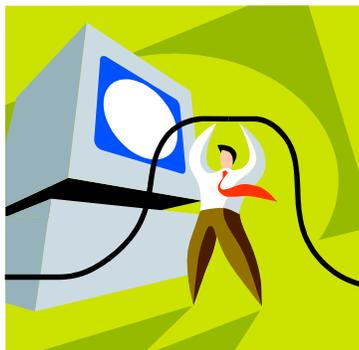
ISO's 4th Principal, a "Process Approach", correlates closely with HDI's "Process and Procedure" element. Specifically, this ISO principle maintains that "a desired result is achieved more efficiently when activities and related resources are managed *as a process*" (italics mine). The implication is that whatever enterprise activity you are engaged in – strategic planning, product or service development, resource management, staffing, measuring performance, optimizing call handling, etc. – approaching and managing the issue as a process will yield higher efficiencies and superior results.

HDI's SCC model extends the importance of process to the support environment, maintaining that "the support function must have in place processes that allow it to be successful." So while ISO emphasizes the need for an overall "process approach" at the enterprise level, HDI's model is support specific -- stressing that key processes "must be

well-defined, measurable, documented, communicated and understood by those who will manage and execute these processes."

Specific support processes outlined by the HDI SCC model include call logging and tracking, triage or root cause analysis, call escalation, performance measurement and reporting, quality monitoring and improvement, knowledge management, information management and distribution, change control, customer satisfaction measurement, and service level management.

Let's look further at how the SCC model supports the ISO Process Approach principle:

1. ISO maintains that taking a process approach will lead to "systematically defining the activities necessary to obtain a desired result". The HDI SCC model extends this principle to the support center, emphasizing that "the support function must have in place processes that allow it to be successful."

2. ISO emphasizes that taking a process approach will lead the organization to "establish clear responsibility and accountability for managing key activities". Underscoring the importance of responsibility and accountability for support, the HDI model incorporates Leadership as one of its eight key elements. In the HDI model, strong leadership is essential to applying a process approach and executing quality processes.

3. According to ISO, a process approach will also lead to "analyzing and measuring of the capability of key activities." Supporting this principle, HDI's SCC model emphasizes that "processes [must be] well-defined, measurable." In fact, the HDI model is structured so that the five "Enabling Factors", if properly provided for, make it possible for the support organization to perform at an optimum level. This leads to optimal "Result Factors" -- People Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance Metrics. Indeed, the SCC model stipulates that the optimized support organization must carefully measure, analyze and report on their results in these three key areas.

4. ISO states that a process approach will also lead to "identifying interfaces of key activities within and between the functions of the organization." From a support perspective, the HDI model emphasizes the need to be tightly integrated into the fabric of the enterprise: "[it is] essential that any support function be fully integrated with the rest of IT."

5. ISO also notes that taking a process approach will lead to "focusing on the factors such as resources, methods, and materials that will improve key activities of the organization." HDI supports this notion by naming Resources as one of eight elements in the SCC model, and a key Enabling Factor. According to the HDI model, a support organization must have "… access to the resources and tools necessary to achieve the established objectives."

6. Finally, ISO's process approach leads to "evaluating risks, consequences and impacts of activities on customers, suppliers and other interested parties." HDI's SCC model extends this principle to the support environment by emphasizing the importance of including key parties in both planning and measuring results. For example, key stakeholders must be polled when developing support's strategic plan. Customers and partners must be included when developing service plans and support agreements. Finally, customers and partners are to be surveyed for feedback concerning their level of satisfaction with support.

Both ISO and the HDI model agree on the key benefits that accrue to an organization when implementing a process approach and instituting good procedures:

- Lower costs and faster cycle times as a result of more effective use of resources
- Improved, consistent and predictable results
- Focused and prioritized improvement opportunities

5. ISO's "Systems Approach to Management" and the HDI SCC Model

ISO's fifth principle stipulates that management should take a "systems approach" to managing the enterprise, since "identifying, understanding and managing interrelated processes as a system contributes to the organization's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its objectives".

Although the HDI SCC model does not specifically provide for "systems management" as one of the model's Elements, the notion of applying a systems approach is implicit throughout the HDI model.

1. For example, ISO states that a systems approach leads to "understanding the interdependencies between the processes of the system." The very design of the HDI SCC model itself underscores the interdependence of processes: that a set of "Enabling Factors" must be in place and operating at optimal performance in order for a support organization to realize a high level of "Results Factors".

2. ISO's system management principle also leads to "structured approaches that harmonize and integrate processes." The HDI model emphasizes the need for harmony and integration of processes within support as well as between support and the rest of the organization. In fact, HDI's Strategy and Policy Element states that the "…support function be fully integrated with the rest of IT" (or its parent organization in the enterprise).

3. The ISO principle notes that systems must be structured "to achieve the organization's objectives in the most effective and efficient way." HDI's model is consistent with this approach from a support perspective, noting that support strategy, goals and objectives must be carefully aligned with those of the larger enterprise. In addition, the Resource Element of the HDI model further emphasizes the importance of systems in achieving established objectives: "the support organization must have access to the resources and tools necessary… these may be infrastructure-related or support specific." Noted are such essentials as problem/call management systems, knowledge bases, and self-help tools. The SCC model further states that employing these systems and tools "can provide significant increases in support center efficiency and customer (end user) productivity, which translates directly to cost savings, superior service, or both.

4. Adopting the ISO systems approach enables a better understanding of the "roles and responsibilities" necessary to achieve common objectives, and thereby

reduce cross-functional barriers. The HDI SCC model supports this principle in two ways. First, the SCC model underscores the importance of a solid understanding of roles and responsibilities with its People Management Element. Standards dictate that job descriptions and an effective performance appraisal system must be in place. Second, HDI's Leadership Element requires that the support organization develop close alignment of its strategy and practices with that of the larger enterprise – with the natural result of minimizing cross-functional barriers.

5. The ISO systems approach principle also emphasizes "understanding organizational capabilities and establishing resource constraints prior to action", "defining how specific activities within a system should operate", and "continually improving the system through measurement and evaluation." The HDI SCC model supports these notions in two key ways:

First, the "Enabling Factors" emphasize how important it is that the support organization be conscious of its organizational capabilities. The Leadership and Policy & Strategy Elements also emphasize the importance of effective leadership, strategy and operational business plans. The People Management Element underscores the importance of managing human resources, and how crucial this is to achieving organizational objectives. Finally, the Resources Element spells out all of the essential systems and tools a world-class support organization needs to have at its disposal.

Second, the "Results Factors" -- Employee Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance Results – specify how the organization should monitor and measure its activities to achieve optimal performance.

Adopting the ISO principle of a Systems Approach supported by the HDI model will allow an organization to realize the following key benefits:

- Integration and alignment of the key processes that will achieve desired results
- Ability to focus effort of the key processes
- Providing confidence to interested parties as to the consistency, effectiveness and efficiency of the organization

6. ISO's Principle of "Continual Improvement" and the HDI Model

ISO's sixth principle states that "continual improvement of the organization's overall performance should be a permanent objective of the organization." Although the HDI SCC Model does not feature a "continuous improvement" Element per se, it does emphasize that continuous improvement should be an integral part of many facets of the support organization.   Indeed, many of the 67 individual Standards in the SCC model include a "continual improvement" assessment as one of the factors for obtaining complete compliance.

Some examples of assessing "continuous improvement" in the HDI model include…

> Leadership:
> - Resource optimization – are resource levels adjusted as required to meet service levels?
>
> Strategy & Policy:
> - Does the organization review and update its Vision and Mission statements on an annual basis?
> - Are the support center's business plans updated regularly to support the changing requirements of the business?
>
> Process & Procedure:
> - Service requests – is a process in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of service requests and to identify continuous improvement?

In addition, the HDI SCC process is not a one-time certification program – it is by design an on-going certification program and *process*. The initial certification is for a two-year term. Thereafter an organization must re-certify on an annual basis. The intent: provide the support organization with an on-going program for continual improvement.

The ISO principle of "continual improvement" also states that adopting this principle leads to a number of favorable activities. These are listed as follows, along with how the HDI SCC model supports these activities:

1. ISO's principle leads to an organization that will "employ a consistent organization-wide approach to continual improvement of the organizations performance." The HDI SCC model supports this notion because the program itself embodies this very idea – that of a continual program of improvement for the help desk or support center organization.

2. The ISO principle also leads to "providing people with training in the methods and tools of continual improvement". Again the HDI SCC model is supportive – the People Management Element emphasizes the need for training plans, career plans, and reward and recognition programs for outstanding achievement.

3. Adopting this ISO principle also leads to "making continual improvement of products, processes and systems an objective for every individual in the organization." Adopting the SCC program makes this goal support center specific, since the SCC model includes requirements for continual improvement in many of the standards and elements. Engaging the SCC program puts a support center on a solid path for continual improvement.

4. The ISO principle of continual improvement also leads to "establishing goals to guide, and measures to track, continual improvement." This is what the "Results Factors" of the HDI SCC model are all about – goals and measurement for ensuring People Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance Results are all at optimum levels.

5. Finally, the ISO principle leads to is "recognizing and acknowledging improvements." Here too, the HDI SCC model is supportive. The "Results Factors" are designed to monitor and make it possible to recognize improvements that lead to greater people satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and performance results. In addition, the People Management Element specifically calls for an "awards and
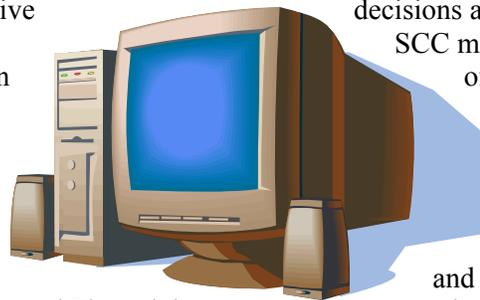
recognition" program that provides on-going recognition and reward for improvements made.

When an organization has adopted the ISO principle of continual improvement, also supported by HDI's SCC program, it can look forward to the following benefits:

- Performance advantage through improved organizational capabilities
- Alignment of improvement activities at all levels to an organization's strategic intent
- Flexibility to react quickly to opportunities

7. ISO's "Factual approach to decision making" and the HDI Model

ISO's seventh principle states that "effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information." HDI's SCC model is very supportive of this notion. The very design of the model is based on the supposition that a set of "Enabling Factors", if properly provided for, will result in an optimum set of "Results Factors". And these Results Factors – People Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance Results – are all based on empirical measurements: Employee and Customer Satisfaction surveys; Performance metrics; and Financial reporting. Indeed, the SCC model is quite supportive of providing facts to enable informed decision making.

ISO's factual approach principle leads to a number of activities, each of which are supported by HDI's SCC model:

1. First, ISO states that this principle leads to "data and information that are sufficiently accurate and reliable". HDI's SCC model is in agreement with this, stating "measurement processes must be objective, reliable and realistic." The HDI model extends this principle to the support center environment by requiring specific metrics be in place to measure People Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance Results. The periodic SCC audit process reviews the processes and tools that monitor these metrics, ensuring that they meet the accuracy and reliability standards of the program.

2. The ISO principle also results in "making data accessible to those who need it." Again, the HDI SCC program extends this to the support environment by specifying the kinds of information that should be available, and to whom. Guidelines are provided for strategic and operations plans, performance information, employee and customer satisfaction surveys, routine communication and marketing materials.

3. Another result this principle leads to is "analyzing data and information using valid methods." The HDI SCC model, in its Performance Results Element, provides basic guidelines on how data should be analyzed in a support environment so that it is evaluated properly.

4. Finally, the factual approach principle leads to "making decisions and taking action based on factual analysis, balanced with experience and intuition." HDI's SCC

model supports the notion that managers must be equipped with accurate, timely and reliable information upon which to base their decisions.

In adopting the ISO principle of factual approach to decision making, supported by the SCC model, an organization will reap the following benefits:

- Informed decisions
- An increased ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of past decisions through reference to factual records
- Increased ability to review, challenge and change opinions and decisions

8. ISO's "Mutually beneficial supplier relationships" and the HDI Model

The eighth ISO principle states that "an organization and its suppliers are interdependent and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value." The HDI SCC model supports of this ideal in a number of ways:

- Under the Leadership Element, the model stresses that Distribution of Information should be made available to non-support center personnel to help them improve their performance.

- In Strategy and Policy, support organizations must take into account key stakeholder input in a meaningful and balanced manner.

- Under Process and Procedure, the HDI model stipulates that service level management processes must exist between its customers, suppliers and internal support partners. In addition, adequate communications feedback processes must be in place between the support center, its customers and its various support partners and suppliers.

Let's examine how the HDI SCC model supports the ISO principle of "mutually beneficial supplier relationships":

1. The ISO principle leads to "establishing relationships that balance short-term gains with long-term considerations." HDI's SCC model is supportive of this notion – it encourages close cooperation between the support center and suppliers in a number of areas, from communication, to planning, to day-to-day operations.

2. The "pooling of expertise with partners" that ISO refers to is also supported by the HDI model in that the SCC model encourages communication and cooperation with support partners.

3. "Clear and open communications", as well as "sharing information and future plans", is supported by HDI's requirement that the communications process include suppliers and support partners.

4. HDI's model is also supportive of the notion that that the organization should "establish joint development and improvement activities" – by sharing information

and soliciting feedback from support partners and suppliers, the support center is building a successful collaborative relationship.

5. Finally, the ISO principle leads to "inspiring, encouraging and recognizing improvements and achievements by suppliers." HDI's model supports this by emphasizing the importance of recognition and reward programs in the support center organization.

When an organization commits itself to the ISO principle of mutually beneficial supplier relationships, also supported by the HDI SCC model, the support organization can expect to realize the following key benefits:

- Increase ability to create value for both parties
- Flexibility and speed of joint responses to changing market or customer needs and expectations
- Optimization of costs and resources

Conclusion

As the world shrinks, markets expand and competition becomes more challenging, it's almost a "no brainer" than winning companies become certified in accordance with best practices. From a high level enterprise standpoint, ISO certification is certainly the leading best practices standard that companies should be measuring themselves against. ISO principles set the bar when it comes to high level guidelines, and ISO certification helps an organization ensure that all of its various functions are in step with quality standards.

When it comes to their support organization, companies should look to a model and set of standards that is supportive of ISO, but one that focuses specifically on helping them achieve best practices for support. That program is the HDI Support Center Certification program.

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Bringing You Closer to Your Customers

Appendix

References

- ISO Principles can be found in the document "Quality Management Principles" – Source: http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/iso9000-14000/iso9000/qmp.html

- HDI Support Center Certification (SCC) Model and Standards can be found at http://www.thinkhdi.com/certification/siteCertification/