

## Risk Management and Management System Standards in ISO

Interview conducted for isotc262.org with

### José Alcorta, ISO Technical Program Manager for TC 262



José Alcorta has been involved in standardization since 1995 when he joined British Standards Institution where he was team leader and secretary for various ISO committees. In 2011 he joined ISO as a group manager for the Environmental, Quality, Health, Services and Management Systems sector at the Central Secretariat.

**isotc262.org:** *José you have been ISO Technical Program Manager for Technical Committee 262 for several months now and you attended the Amman meeting of TC 262. AS an »old hand« in standardization and risk management can you please describe your experience?*

**José:** Although I have only been directly responsible for TC 262 as Technical Program Manager for a few months, I have been following its work since 2011 when I joined ISO.

I have been involved in standards development since 1995 when I joined the British Standards Institution (BSI). In my last 10 years at BSI, I was Team Leader and Secretary of various ISO committees. This experience, supplemented with over 5 years as Group Manager for the Environmental, Quality, Health, Services and Management Systems sector at ISO Central Secretariat, is very relevant when guiding the TC 262 leadership in their work.

My experience at the meeting in Amman was a positive one as this provided me with an opportunity to closely interact with experts and committee leaders. For me this was particularly important as I got to see firsthand how the group operates and how I can provide guidance in a number of process-related areas.

**isotc262.org:** *What do you do as an ISO Technical Program Manager and what is your perception of the Amman meeting of TC 262?*

**José:** The role of Technical Program Manager (TPM) involves in-depth knowledge of the ISO/IEC Directives, including being able to provide best practice and interpretation of the

different rules. TPMs oversee the work of technical committees, providing guidance to the leadership, ensuring ISO/IEC Directives are followed and that the program of work meets agreed target dates.

My perception of the TC 262 and WG 2 meetings in Amman was that experts did an excellent work in advancing ISO 31000 to its a new phase and also setting the structures that will provide strong direction to its future work. It was also an emotional meeting saying goodbye to the longstanding TC Chairman and Secretary.

isotc262.org: *What is the role of risk management within ISO and what is the impact of ISO 31000 in this context?*

**José:** Risk Management is an important issue that impacts the work of many ISO technical committees. As most people are aware, the concept of risk management has been introduced in the High Level Structure for Management System Standards (MSS) and this, in turn, is influencing the way organizations using MSS operate.

ISO 31000, as an umbrella standard, provides guidelines that can be applied to any type of organization in any sector. In that respect, the revision of ISO 31000 can play a key role in how organizations are prepared to face future challenges and become more resilient.

isotc262.org: *In Appendix 2 to Annex SL to the ISO Directives appendix 2 the so called HLS (high level structure) prescribes a fixed structure and mandatory wording for ISO Management System Standards (MSS). Two questions:*

- (1) What is a MSS and what is the difference between types A and B MSS?*
- (2) What is the role of risk management in the context of a MSS?*

**José:** Well, these are actually 3 questions:

1) An MSS is a document that describes a set of procedures an organization needs to follow in order to meet its objectives.

2) "Type A" relates to standards containing requirements, e.g. ISO 9001, ISO 14001, etc. On the other hand, "Type B" do not contain requirements and provide guidelines, e.g. ISO 10004, ISO 14004, etc.

3) Risk management is a great contributor to the resilience and survival of organizations as it helps them be better prepared for an uncertain future (offering also new opportunities for success). This concept has now been embedded in management systems.

isotc262.org: *Risk is a topic concerning many committees in ISO and in particular those that deal with MSS considering that »determining risks and opportunities that need to be addressed« has become a mandatory clause. What do you think*

*TC 262 can do to support other committees to ensure a harmonized view on Risk in ISO?*

**José:** Thanks to its composition with both national and international stakeholders, TC 262 has a privileged position to reach out and engage with world-class experts in this field. The TC should continue providing guidelines to standards writers as well as “lighter” pieces of information to disseminate their work and increase awareness.

**isotc262.org:** *ISO Directives require Technical Committees to avoid redundant and contradicting standardization and just two years ago, ISO merged three technical committees to form TC 292 Security and Resilience which seems quite a success. However recently many new standard development projects and committees have been initiated (e.g. TC 309 Organizational Governance). Is there a risk that too many new standards are being developed and what systematic approach is ISO taking to the future development of new committees and standards?*

**José:** I don't think there is a risk that there are too many new standards. As you may know, the ISO/IEC Directives insist on having a strong justification regarding market and global relevance of new work item proposals (otherwise, they should be developed as national or even regional standards but not as international ones). In addition, ISO has a well-established maintenance process whereby, at a maximum of 5 years, a systematic review is carried out on published standards.

Regarding the growing number of technical and project committees, this reflects the important role that ISO plays as technical solutions provider. When a proposal for a new field of work is approved and there is no existing structure (i.e. TC) in existence, the Technical Management Board (TMB) sets up a new Project Committee. Since this is an ongoing process, the TMB, through its Coherence Task Group, looks into bringing consistency across the structure and, in some cases, a number of committees are merged into a single structure (e.g. TC 302 energy management, TC 309 governance, etc.). This is an ongoing review to ensure the structures support the technical development work avoiding unnecessary overlap and duplication.

**isotc262.org:** *ISO 31000 quickly became one of the bestselling and most well recognized standards in ISO. What do you think about the future of the standard and how will it change to adapt to new challenges?*

**José:** ISO 31000 is a high impact standard and its revision will bring it up to date with current good practice and clearer guidelines. It is therefore critical that TC 262 continues to engage relevant stakeholders and listen to practitioners in the user community.

**isotc262.org:** *What message do you want to give to the risk management community?*

**José:** Make sure your voice is heard, without your feedback and contribution standards will not have the potential positive impact on organizations.

isotc262.org: *What advice can you give to interested parties globally who want to offer their input to the work of ISO/TC 262 and who should they address?*

**José:** My advice would be to get in touch with your National Standards Development organization (see list at [http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/iso\\_members.htm](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/iso_members.htm)) and have your say in this revision process and future standards. Your views are important to us, either as an expert in a national mirror committee or by providing feedback as a user.

isotc262.org: **Thank you very much!**

**José:** Thanks to you; it is a real pleasure to be part of this technical committee.