



Industry Forum

Business Excellence Through Inspired People

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Getting started with VDA 6.3 Process Audit

The process approach underpins a vast amount of contemporary business management and strategy whether this is the improvement of existing business processes or the introduction of new processes in support of innovative products and/or services.

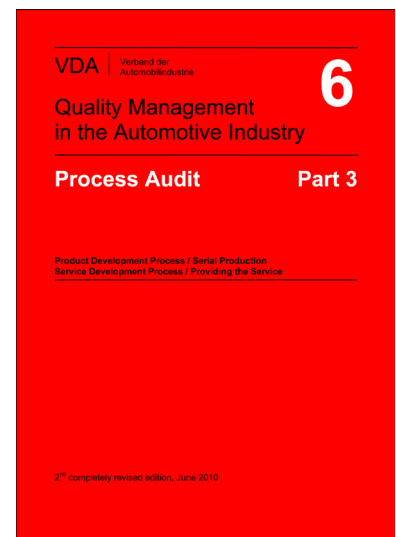
The Audit Standard VDA 6.3 is a standardised procedure for the conduct of process audits to assess organisational performance and capability for their product realisation processes. The standard is intended to complement and reinforce widely adopted standards such as ISO 9001, ISO/TS 16949 and other sector specific quality derivatives of ISO 9001 such as those for aerospace and medical equipment. Such audits are a vital element in determining whether an organisation/supplier has the capability to meet the needs of a purchaser. Getting this judgement right can make all the difference to the success of a project.

VDA 6.3 may also be used to good effect internally within an organisation. In this case, the goal of the audit is to analyse processes throughout the whole product life cycle so that risks and weaknesses are detected both in the processes themselves and in their interfaces. The audit report can then form the basis of an improvement plan.

VDA 6.3 was developed by the Verband der Automobilindustrie (VDA) which is the national association for the German automotive industry. They devised VDA 6.3 as a unique procedure beyond any comparable approach worldwide. It was introduced in 1998 and substantially revised in 2010. The revision has been prompted by an appreciation that the time between the formulation of the concept for a new product and its manufacture is becoming increasingly shorter. As a result, various areas within companies have to operate in parallel to an ever greater degree which places greater demands on organisations, their processes and their staff.

The standard now covers:

- Potential analysis – to assess a new supplier, new location or new technology
- Project management
- Planning the product and process development
- Carrying out the product and process development
- Supplier management
- Production
- Customer support, customer satisfaction and service



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Risk analysis is a major element in the preparation for an audit. Besides the process inputs and outputs, risk analysis must consider:

- How does the process operate?
- How is the process supported by various functions and other areas of the organisation and by direct personnel?
- What material resources are required to carry out the process?
- What level of effectiveness is being achieved by the process?

The outcome of the VDA 6.3 audit is determined through a quality matrix and is allocated one of three values:

- A - Quality-capable
- B - Conditionally quality-capable
- C - Not quality-capable



Within the matrix each of the six elements from project management to customer support is assessed. There are detailed rules for deriving the outcome value from each of the stages. VDA 6.3 auditing is a skilled process and accordingly VDA 6.3 sets competence requirements for auditors.

For the six process elements, from project management through to customer service, the standard provides a questionnaire which covers the minimum requirements, examples of requirements and proof of compliance plus reference information. The questions are closed questions for the auditor to answer within the audit but to get the answers the auditor must ask open questions, based on the risks identified.

For example, on project management there are seven questions including: Is the project organisation established and are tasks and authorities specified for the team leader and team members? The minimum requirements include having a project management process with authorities within the project team clearly specified with all expertise provided for implementation. At the other end of the life cycle, six high level questions cover customer support, customer satisfaction and service. The first question is 'Are the customer's requirements for the Quality Management System, product and process satisfied?' This is a broad question covering, amongst other things, the organisations quality management certification status, supply of spares for products moving outside series production, packaging meeting customer requirements, product requalification requirements and conformance with legislation.

The potential analysis is part of the sourcing process and examines potential suppliers. It evaluates the experience of the potential supplier in creating similar products.





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In conclusion, VDA 6.3 is an approach that can be used by any manufacturing organisation to help drive process improvement. Although developed by the automotive industry it is not exclusive to automotive organisations.

Industry Forum, as part of the SMMT, are well placed to deliver training and support on VDA 6.3. For individuals with no previous experience Module A which gives an overview of the requirements of the Process Audit and its underpinning methodology, is the best place to start. Module BII is internal auditor training. This module enables delegates to understand the structure, content and scoring evaluation system of VDA 6.3. They will be able to apply these elements to their own process areas. Module E incorporates Module A, BII and Module C (the exam module). This qualifies delegates to undertake VDA 6.3 audits externally (at suppliers).

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has just published an influential report, 'Pulling Together', that shows that to convert the current sense of optimism in the UK manufacturing sector into sustainable success we need stronger supply chains in the UK. In this way growth can filter down to all manufacturing sectors (and beyond) and into all the regions of the UK. Companies across the world are re-evaluating their supply chains. Mastering process audit disciplines and using the results as a powerful improvement plan are an excellent way for UK businesses to benefit from these current trends.

SMMT Industry Forum is the only UK approved training provider licensed and qualified by VDA to deliver sanctioned VDA 6.3 training. For more information visit the industry Forum website VDA section or call the VDA Team on +44(0)121 717 6600.

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