WORKING MATERIAL · SUBCHAPTER 4.13

Multi-Site Certification and Scope Extensions

GUIDING QUESTION *If a serious problem were found at your smallest and most remote property tomorrow, who in your organisation has the authority to compel a change there, and can that authority be shown in a document rather than described in a meeting?*

Property: _____ Completed by: _____ Date: _____

How to use this sheet: work through the four parts with the people who own the process. The left-hand text comes from the book; the empty columns are for what is true in your property.

1. Verification Pact: what the market says, what actually holds, and your property

What the market says	What actually holds	In our property
"We use the same manual everywhere, so we qualify as one system."	No. A shared manual shows similarity, which matters only for the second question, whether sites may be sampled. The first is whether there is a single management system under a central function with the authority to require corrective action at every site; a management agreement that reserves operating decisions to an operator removes that authority for the site concerned.	
"The auditor will visit two or three sites, so we pay for two or three."	Partly. The sample is approximately √n of the sites at initial certification, 0.6√n at surveillance and 0.8√n at recertification, rounded up, and the body can increase it for risk; the central function is examined as well. Audit time is calculated under TECH-3-004 (formerly IAF MD 5) for the central function and each sampled site, so the fee does not fall in proportion to the sites not visited.	
"Sites are picked at random, so exposure is spread evenly."	No. At least a quarter of the sample must be random, but the rest is chosen by the body on risk, typically towards sites with previous findings, complaints, recent changes or operational differences. The weakest site is more likely to be visited, not less.	
"A problem found at one hotel is that hotel's problem."	No. A nonconformity at a sampled site is raised against the single system. The organisation has to investigate whether other sites are affected and act wherever they are, and the body examines that investigation. A finding is not automatically a suspension, but an unresolved one affects the certificate every site relies on.	
"Adding the eighth hotel is an administrative update."	No. Adding a site is an extension of scope. The body evaluates it before agreeing, which may mean additional audit time or an audit at the new site, and the site has to be operating within the central system, under the central function's authority, before it can be included.	
"If we sell one hotel it takes its part of the certificate with it."	No. A multi-site certificate is issued to the organisation that runs the single system. A site that leaves is removed from the scope and takes no share of the certificate with it. Whether it can be certified separately afterwards, and on what terms, depends on its new owner or operator and on the evaluation of the body concerned.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The management, franchise and joint venture agreements for each property, read for the clauses that allocate control of operating decisions, not the summary of them held by the group.		
Record	The internal audit programme across its full planned cycle, showing coverage of every site rather than a sample, with the grounds on which timing was determined.		
Read	The stated scope of the certificate against the list of properties actually operating, including any acquired, disposed of or rebranded during the cycle.		
Seen	The central function at work (an instance in which it required something of a site and the site did it), which is the only direct evidence that the authority exists in practice as well as on paper.		
Told	What a site general manager says happens when the centre asks for something. Where the honest answer is that it is a negotiation, the eligibility question has been answered.		
Re-performed	One corrective action raised at one site followed through the central function to the other sites, to see whether the system treated it as a group condition or as a local repair.		
Absence	No document allocating authority per property, and no evidence that the central function has ever required a change at a site it does not directly operate.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Testing for similarity instead of authority.	A shared manual, a shared brand and shared training prove that the sites resemble each other, which answers the second question, whether sites may be sampled, and not the first.	
Assuming ownership implies control.	In hospitality it frequently does not, and the agreement says so in language that was negotiated by people who were not thinking about certification.	
Presenting the saving without the pooled exposure.	It is not a technical omission; it is an incomplete paper put to a board.	
Running the group's internal audits on the certification body's sampling logic.	The body samples to verify; the group must cover to manage.	
Treating an acquisition as an address change.	A new site enters an existing certificate and can affect it immediately, and the extension is an evaluation with audit time attached.	
Ignoring the disposal case.	Where properties are bought and sold inside a cycle, the indivisibility of a multi-site certificate is a commercial fact that belongs in the decision.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline

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In brief

A multi-site certificate is one certificate with several addresses. Eligibility turns first on authority, and similarity decides only whether sites may then be sampled: the central function must be able to require corrective action at every site, and in hospitality (where ownership, management and brand are routinely held by different companies) that authority frequently does not exist at some of the properties a group considers its own. Where it does not, the honest treatment is control of an externally provided process, not a manual asserting a power the agreements withhold.

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