Stage 1: The Audit Whose Subject Is Time

GUIDING QUESTION *Your system will be finished in July. Work backwards: what has to have already happened by then, how long does each of those things take, and which of them cannot be started until another has finished?*

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
Stage 1 is a documentation review.	No. Stage 1 includes review of documented information but has broader readiness, site, scope, planning and implementation objectives.	
Stage 1 may be conducted remotely in all cases.	No. Remote methods may be used where appropriate, but stage 1 method and location depend on the objectives, risks and client circumstances.	
Three months of records is sufficient for certification.	No universal three-month minimum is specified by ISO 9001 or ISO/IEC 17021-1; the evidence must be sufficient to demonstrate readiness and operation.	
One internal audit satisfies the requirement before stage 2.	No. The certification body evaluates whether internal audits and management review are being planned and performed sufficiently to demonstrate readiness; one audit is not a universal threshold.	
Concerns raised at stage 1 are not nonconformities.	Correct in a limited sense: stage 1 identifies areas of concern that could become nonconformities at stage 2; they are documented and communicated.	
The interval between the stages is at the client's discretion.	No. Timing considers the client's needs and the time required to resolve stage-1 concerns and prepare for stage 2.	
A postponed stage 2 is recorded as a failed certification.	No. A postponed stage 2 is not automatically a failed certification; certification has not yet been granted and readiness/timing must be managed.	

2. Objective evidence: what an auditor would examine

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Document	The scope and the applicability determinations, the determination of statutory and regulatory requirements, and the planned arrangements for internal audit and management review.		
Record	What has actually run: the internal audits performed and their coverage, the management review held and its inputs, corrective actions and their results, and any evaluation of the effectiveness of actions on risks and on opportunities.		
Read	The performance information prepared for the management review, checked for whether it expresses direction or a single value. It is one of the quickest readiness tests available and it takes a few minutes.		
Told	Ask when the first customer satisfaction data was analysed, as distinct from collected. A property that set an annual analysis cadence has data and no analysis, whatever the age of the system.		

Line	What to examine	Found? (Yes / Partly / No)	Notes and location
Seen	The operation running under the system as described. Stage 1 is not confined to documents and a property expecting a desk review will be surprised by how much walking is involved.		
Absence	There will be no evaluated effectiveness of any action taken on an opportunity. In a young system this need not be a deficiency, provided the actions and the way their effectiveness will be evaluated are planned; a property that presents a fabricated one has created a far worse problem than the absence.		

3. Common mistakes: self-check

Mistake	Why it matters	Present here? (Yes / Partly / No)
Planning forwards from when the work can be finished.	Documents respond to effort; history does not, and a Stage 2 examines the second.	
Overlooking the chains.	Determine, plan, implement, wait, evaluate is a sequence with a waiting period in it, and it sets the earliest honest date for the whole project.	
Reading the review inputs as a list of headings.	The performance inputs include trends, and a measure calculated once is a value, whatever the age of the system.	
Setting the analysis cadence to the review cadence.	It produces a property with data and no analysis, and it can happen in a system built last spring by good people.	
Treating Stage 1 as a formality.	It decides whether Stage 2 happens, what it examines and whether the quotation holds, and it gives away a preview of the Stage 2 findings.	
Presenting a compressed system anyway.	A management review with no trends in it does not become one by being submitted, and the Stage 2 fee goes with the time.	
Telling the buyer late.	There is a day in a framework market after which nothing can be accommodated, and it is printed on the invitation.	
Fabricating what cannot yet exist.	An invented effectiveness evaluation is a far worse problem than an absent one, and it is the one thing in this chapter that turns a delay into something else.	

4. Action plan

Position from the book / gap found	Action in our property	Owner	Deadline
The calendar is built backwards from what must have run, not forwards from when the work can be finished.			
The chains are identified.			
The management review inputs are checked against the word trends.			
Stage 1 is prepared for rather than tolerated.			
The buyer is told before the closing date.			

In brief

Stage 1 asks whether a Stage 2 is possible, and in doing so it examines the one thing a property cannot produce on demand. Its outcome may be a postponement, which is the cheapest negative result in the whole cycle, and its report is a preview of the next audit written by the person who will conduct it.

Source: The Helm and the Lens, Volume 2b: The Lens, subchapter 4.4. This sheet does not reproduce the text of any standard; work with your own copy of ISO 9001:2026 from an authorised source.