



Quality, All Day

Equipped with ISO certification, Southbend serves up quicker international deliveries

The heat was on, for Southbend, and the temperature was rising—but for once, it wasn't a good thing.

Southbend, a Middlebury Corporation Company based in Fuquay-Varina, NC, manufactures a broad range of commercial cooking equipment. The company's ranges, broilers, steamers and fryers are found in the best and busiest kitchens around the world. The company even maintains a research and development kitchen where its dealers and customers can come to learn how to operate and get the best results from the equipment. In the foodservice industry, the Southbend logo is recognized as a mark of quality and durability; the company's problem was that its overseas customers were increasingly demanding formal recognition of that quality.

"Our completed, international customer orders were held from shipment pending a third-party inspection. The process sometimes took up to 90 days, waiting on import approval," explains Dale Price, Southbend's Vice President of Engineering. As anyone who had ever worked in a commercial kitchen knows, the pace of restaurant life is breakneck, and 90 days may as well be a lifetime. Southbend began to feel the burn.

"Our inventory cycle turns decreased," says Price. "Our inventory volume in the warehouse increased, customer request dates for shipments were going past due and customer payments were delayed, due to the fact that we were unable to ship the finished goods."

Price saw the company's customer satisfaction rate sliding, and knew that it was time for Southbend to get certified to the ISO 9001 standard.

Southbend Challenge

Southbend was subject to lengthy third-party inspection of its export products, resulting in sluggish shipping times and dissatisfied customers

IES Solution ISO 9001 certification

Benefits

Dramatically decreased time to international markets

Worldwide Approval

ISO, short for the International Organization for Standardization, sets forth requirements for the maintenance of quality management systems. Companies that hold ISO certification are held to the same standards of quality, no matter where in the world they are found. In situations like Southbend's, ISO certification can replace requisite third-party inspections.

Price began searching for an organization that had both quality systems expertise and training ability, to lead Southbend through the ISO registration process, and found NC State Industry Expansion Solutions (IES), the administrator for the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NCMEP). An IES improvement specialist guided Southbend personnel through the creation of its own quality management system, and kept the team on track to attain its goal within its desired timeline.

Now, when customers ask to see Southbend's quality policy and quality manual, it's easy to comply; the

company developed both documents as part of its ISO 9001 certification. Speed to market was dramatically reduced following the change, and the company was immediately more competitive in the international arena.

Southbend saw a record sales year after ISO implementation, and was recently able to begin construction on a 45,000 square-foot building addition. According to Price, the benefits of certification extend even farther. "Internally, we have streamlined processes and have a more defined workflow," says Price. "Southbend employees have noticed the improvements, and across the organization, they have embraced the quality efforts. We strive for continuous improvement. We continue to grow more responsive to implementing changes, and to addressing issues that affect our customers' satisfaction."

In recent months, the company transitioned to the revised quality standard ISO 9001:2015 to maintain the certification that has made such a positive difference to its business.

NC STATE

Industry Expansion Solutions

Industry Expansion Solutions (IES), the administrator for NCMEP, is the engineering-based, solutions-driven, client-focused extension unit of NC State's College of Engineering. Our broad portfolio and deep industry expertise help organizations grow, innovate and prosper. Our extensive partnerships with business, industry, education and government generate a unique culture of collaboration that provides access to cutting-edge expertise, research and technology.

Grow Your Business With Confidence. Contact Us Today.

Visit our website: www.ies.ncsu.edu to find the IES Regional Manager nearest you. Contact us by phone: 1.800.227.0264 or email: iesservices@ncsu.edu

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