

Reduce your audit costs

You might not be able to change the rate
but you can certainly reduce the time!

by **Martin Stone**, Director of HACCP Australia

With the increase in requirements for demonstrating compliance to a given standard, audit costs are steadily rising across the industry. The ultimate cost of a food safety audit is based on the amount of time an auditor spends on site plus a travel component, also based on time. Typically, that total time is multiplied by a rate to yield the total cost. The trick to reducing auditing costs therefore, is to reduce the time of the audit.

There are three areas that I regularly see as having potential for reducing audit time which are under the control of the auditee. These include the evidence provided to the auditor, preparation for the audit and activities on the audit day itself.....here are some practical tips to ensure you are minimising your audit costs;

Evidence.

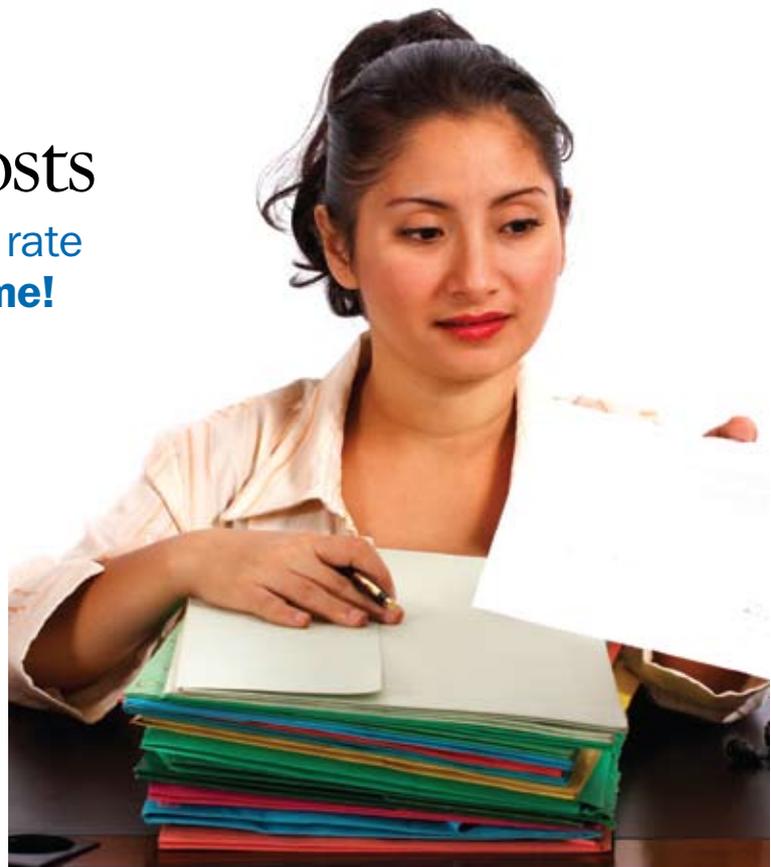
- Auditors base decisions on evidence. The better the evidence, the less time an auditor will take to make a decision. The best supporting evidence consists of relevant documents that get to the heart of a matter. Documents should be titled, signed and dated. Photographs should be headed and dated. Cross references should be logical and easy to follow. Make it easy for the auditor to join the dots and come to a correct and timely decision.
- Remember that facts are quicker for an auditor to respond to...compared to opinions....The provision of hard, concise and factual evidence will save auditing time and money.

Preparation.

- Read the last audit report carefully. Consider recommendations or any issues requiring close outs at this audit and be prepared with the chain of evidence that will be required. Expect the auditor to want to investigate any anomalies raised at prior audits and again, have relevant information at hand to provide to the auditor.
- Pre-audit yourselves. Imagine the non-conformances or questions that could be raised...be prepared with an answer and chain of evidence to support your assertions. By anticipating the questions to come from an auditor, you can be ready with the answers.
- Many facilities have lengthy induction/site entry programmes which are underpinned by the requirement for visitors to read and respond to lengthy documents. Consider if some of the induction programme for visitors can be conducted off site. A system that allows an auditor to complete some or all of an induction programme prior to arriving on site will reduce site time of the audit.

The audit day.

- Ask the auditor; "Can we proceed quicker if possible, what can we do to reduce the time required?" Let the auditor



know that you wish to keep audit time to a minimum and will do what you can to facilitate this. Ask the question at the start of the audit and again, for next time, at the closing meeting.

- Get a plan for the audit and ensure the relevant people available at each stage. If a key person is not available at a particular time, alter the audit plan to suite. Do not get in a position where you are waiting for a key person to finish a meeting before interacting with the auditor.
- Have someone available for the auditor to access at all times.... Think 'assistant auditor' and assigning someone like this can save you a lot of time. This 'someone' needs to know where all the references are and how to find anything that the auditor may request. The idea here is to keep the information flowing to the auditor, rather than receiving a big list of requests that result in dead auditing time whilst the required information is retrieved.
- Ensure complete access to the plant is available for a single plant inspection. Having to go to and from the plant because one section or another is closed or in wash down or 'starting up later' wastes time. Tour the facility in a logical common sense manner. Start with receivals and end with dispatch. This makes the process easy to understand and will speed transit through the facility. Auditors need guiding, tell them where key monitoring takes place and point out 'places of interest' and those locations relevant to the programme being audited. Again, do everything you can to ensure the tour is a 'one-pass'. Coming back to the plant to check on something that was not observed in the first pass wastes large amounts of time.
- Develop a one page index of your system so that an auditor can find a relevant section quickly and easily. A diagram of the system component parts is also great to help an auditor who is unfamiliar with your system, pull it all together in their own mind. Understanding your system always takes some audit time but you can minimise this.
- Provide somewhere quiet and not cramped for the auditor

to sit and review. A big desk or table that they can spread out on is essential.

- Ensure your records are organised, chronologically and complete. Check this yourself if you rely on others to put the records together. Missing records will waste time. If you discover missing records that cannot be located before the audit, determine a cause and be prepared for questioning by the auditor in this regard. If the records have been misplaced, ask the auditor if you can send them for review on a later date rather than making the auditor wait as you conduct a sweep of the operation.
- I recently reviewed a report where an auditor returned on a second day to complete an audit and logged only one hour of audit time for this day. They also logged an additional two hours of travel time for this second day. By staying back another hour, the additional travel time could have been avoided. Ask your auditor; "Can we stay back to complete rather than coming another day?"

Above all, try to eliminate the 'waiting for' moments in an audit....waiting to see this item, waiting to find that document or waiting to see that person can be dead audit time which ends up costing your business money. Like most things in food manufacturing, planning really is central to minimising time and costs in this regard.

Let's face it, every year you should be getting better at audits so having shorter audits as an objective is a worthwhile and achievable target. Try setting the auditee team a KPI of reduced audit time and see if you can actively reduce your audit costs.

Good luck with the audit. ❄



Every year, Food Magazine hosts the Food Magazine awards to recognise and reward best practise and innovation in food and beverage processing in Australia and New Zealand. Now in their 12th year, the Awards have become the most highly anticipated event in the industry's calendar.

For the 2016 awards, HACCP Australia continues its sponsorship of the award category **FOOD SAFE EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS.**

This category of award specifically recognises non-food suppliers to the food industry and the major impact this sector has on food safety. Subscribers to this magazine will already understand the importance of non-food material, equipment and services in regard to the integrity and safety of food. It is hoped that these awards will further raise the profile of these issues and assist the food industry in recognising the benefits of true food safe design and characteristics.

Entries are open to all equipment and services used in the food industry and will be judged upon merits such as design, cleanability, consequence of error and overall contribution to food safety. ❄

Visit www.foodmagazineawards.com.au on how to enter.



Product Recalls in Australia www.recalls.gov.au

Many of you will be familiar with this site but for those who are not, it is a very valuable contact and should be listed in many readers' 'favourites'. Keep up to date with products that are subject to a recall. The site has a section devoted specifically to 'food' it is easy to keep a look out for products you might buy or sell.

Food safety daily news www.foodhaccp.com/indexcopynews.html

Worldwide sourced articles on everything to do with food safety. An amazing collection of news updated daily. Better than a daily paper for a food nerd. A great start to any day.

Food safety information council www.foodsafety.asn.au

Governments, industry and professional associations all working together for the noble cause of food illness reduction in society. Great educational material and resources. Bringing focus to the issue of food safety for the consumers.

Airline Meals www.airlinemeals.net

Hate them - or even love them (some people do, you know, Business Class can be good so we've heard!), airline food always prompts comment. While this is not strictly a food technology site, it is food and there is plenty of technology involved in getting it to you (safely) at 30,000 feet! This is good viewing with many amusing comments describing the best to the worst from all over the world - plenty from down-under too. Don't just grumble next time - take a photo and send it in!!

The Heart Foundation Tick www.heartfoundation.org.au

One of the most recognised ticks in Australia. The Heart Foundation has been challenging food companies for nearly 20 years now to improve nutritional content of foodstuffs. It has also been of significant influence in the food label debate and standards formation in recent times. ❄