

Draft requirements for a Design Center section of a builder's quality manual

9.0 Design Centers Operations

9.1 Design Centers Quality Plan

9.1.1 Scope of the Design Centers Operation

The Design Centers operation shall define the scope of its operations.

9.1.2 Process Flow

The company shall define and document a sequence or sequences of activities for the Design Centers operation. This sequence shall include all major activities, communications, and quality assurance activities.

9.1.3 Design Centers Documentation

9.1.3.1 General

The company shall have a defined Design Centers policy for staffing, stocking, and managing the Design Centers.

Procedures shall be implemented to review all Design Center functions to insure that all company minimum requirements are met.

9.1.3.2 Procedures

The Design Centers operation will maintain current copies of procedures and policies that pertain to its operations.

9.1.4 Codes, Standards, Regulations

Procedures shall be implemented to assure that all applicable codes, safety provisions, and governmental regulations, are identified and complied with.

9.1.5 Design Centers Operations Policies

Procedures or standards shall be developed and implemented for:

- Managing customer appointments
- Documenting customer selections
- Making appropriate arrangements for payments of options or selections
- Updating product and color selection areas
- other processes

9.1.6 Scheduling

Processes shall be developed and implemented to schedule and monitor activities in a timely manner.

9.1.7 Version Control

Procedures shall be established and implemented to assure that the Design Center files clearly indicate which version of the company's policies and procedures apply. When policy has changed or more than one version of the company's policies exists, Design Center offerings shall indicate which policies apply.

9.1.8 Quality System Changes

The Design Centers operation shall implement a documented approval procedure for incorporating changes and improvements to the Design Centers operations quality system. Individual changes to the Design Centers operation's quality plan must be approved, documented, and integrated into the overall company quality plan.

9.2 Quality Assurance Reviews

Appropriate review and approval points to verify compliance with the quality plan shall be established along with criteria for that review and/or approval. Documentation requirements for these reviews shall also be defined and implemented.

9.3 Design Centers Operations Continual Improvement

9.3.1 Preventive Actions

Actions shall be established and implemented to eliminate recurring quality and safety issues in the Design Centers operation. These actions shall include identification, prioritization, cause analysis, development and implementation of a plan of preventive action. When appropriate these actions shall include recommendations of changes in procedures or company performance standards. The effectiveness of the preventive actions shall be evaluated. When identified issues have not been eliminated, the plan shall be reassessed and appropriate actions initiated.

9.3.2 Design Centers Training

A program of ongoing training for all Design Center employees and trade contractors involved in the processes shall be implemented. This training shall focus on identified opportunities for improvement that lead to reducing recurring quality issues in the Design Centers operation. This training shall include both task specific skills (including safety) and training in the operation of the company's quality system.

9.3.3 Internal Reviews

The company quality committee shall require internal reviews of the Design Centers operation to assure that the policies and procedures of the Design Centers operations quality system are met. The reviewer shall be trained and from outside the Design Centers operation. These reviews shall be documented. When deficiencies in the operation of the quality system are identified, steps to correct any nonconformance shall be taken in a timely manner. Frequency and scope of internal reviews shall be sufficient to assure the effectiveness of the quality system, but shall be conducted at least twice each year.

Example of Gap analysis Format for a Design Center Functional Area

(Note: Requirement language is shown in italics)

9.1 In-House Design Operation Quality Plan

9.1.1 Scope of the In-House design operation

The Design Centers operation shall define the scope of its operations.

Evidence we are looking for.

Describe who, what, when and how the design center operation is carried out. When does the first and last major activity begin? How long does the responsibility of the design center operation last for your customers? How do the design centers relate to sales or to construction? Who manages the in-house design operation and who does this person report to?

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.2 Process Flow

The company shall define and document a sequence or sequences of activities for the Design Centers operation. This sequence shall include all major activities, communications, and quality assurance activities.

Evidence we are looking for.

Define the process flow chart of the Design Center operation from the time preliminary contact through final approval and distribution of options and customer selections. Include the design center role in any subsequent customer revisions.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.3 In-House Design Documentation

9.1.3.1 General

The company shall have a defined Design Centers policy for staffing, stocking, and managing the Design Centers.

Procedures shall be implemented to review all Design Center functions to insure that all company minimum requirements are met.

9.1.3.2 Procedures

The Design Centers operation will maintain current copies of procedures and policies that pertain to its operations.

Evidence we are looking for.

Your procedures for design center documentation.

- Communication plan with all related parties
- Company standard of performance that explains what is to be done and when

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.4 Codes, Standards, Regulations

Procedures shall be implemented to assure that all applicable codes, safety provisions, and governmental regulations, are identified and complied with.

Evidence we are looking for.

Identify any governmental or realtor, or industry regulations that apply to the design center operation. Who keeps record or company copies of these requirements and who updates them? How you confirm that they are adhered to?

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.5 In-House Design Operations Standards

Procedures or standards shall be developed and implemented for:

- *Managing customer appointments*
- *Documenting customer selections*
- *Making appropriate arrangements for payments of options or selections*
- *Updating product and color selection areas*
- *other processes*

Evidence we are looking for.

Design Center progress tracking and reporting processes for the customer process through the design center. Review forms, if any, that verify that explanations and selections work was done properly. Documentation process to evaluate, track, and complete selections and related specifications.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.6 Scheduling

Processes shall be developed and implemented to schedule and monitor activities in a timely manner

Evidence we are looking for.

What is the schedule process, describe the maintenance of the schedule, and explain the communication needed to support implementation with various affected parties.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.7 Version Control

Procedures shall be established and implemented to assure that the Design Center files clearly indicate which version of the company’s policies and procedures apply. When policy has changed or more than one version of the company’s policies exists, Design Center offerings shall indicate which policies apply.

Evidence we are looking for.

Describe how procedures, prices, options, forms, and version dates are labeled and tracked. Describe how revisions are noted and communicated. Identify any process for recalling out-dated price lists or options. Describe how use of the correct versions in the design center is confirmed.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.1.8 Quality System Changes

The Design Centers operation shall implement a documented approval procedure for incorporating changes and improvements to the Design Centers operations quality system. Individual changes to the Design Centers operation’s quality plan must be approved, documented, and integrated into the overall company quality plan.

Evidence we are looking for.

Describe the way the design center operation identifies needed or desired changes in its quality plan, how any such changes are reviewed and approved, and how they are incorporated into the company’s overall quality system.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.2 Quality Assurance Reviews

Appropriate review and approval points to verify compliance with the quality plan shall be established along with criteria for that review and/or approval. Documentation requirements for these reviews shall also be defined and implemented.

Evidence we are looking for.

What is the process for reviewing proposed changes in the design center processes? What is the process for soliciting, considering, and implementing procedural or process changes? What documentation occurs at each step and how is the review process tracked?

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.3 In-House Design Operations Continual Improvement

9.3.1 Preventive Actions

Actions shall be established and implemented to eliminate recurring quality and safety issues in the Design Centers operation. These actions shall include identification, prioritization, cause analysis, development and implementation of a plan of preventive action. When appropriate these actions shall include recommendations of changes in procedures or company performance standards. The effectiveness of the preventive actions shall be evaluated. When identified issues have not been eliminated, the plan shall be reassessed and appropriate actions initiated.

Evidence we are looking for.

This is section of the quality system that identifies continuing issues and works to prevent their occurrence. What process exists for tracking feedback and reaction to the details of the customer selection process and identifying problems or potential improvements? Describe how the continuous improvement effort works.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.3.2 In-House Design Training

A program of ongoing training for all Design Center employees and trade contractors involved in the processes shall be implemented. This training shall focus on identified opportunities for improvement that lead to reducing recurring quality issues in the Design Centers operation. This training shall include both task specific skills (including safety) and training in the operation of the company's quality system.

Evidence we are looking for.

Describe all applicable training available for the Design Center operation, employee selection for receiving training to promote continual improvement and improve technical, design, or negotiating skills. State what records are kept and how they support overall corporate direction (vision & mission) and the section under 1.0 that discusses training at the corporate level.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.

9.3.3 Internal Reviews

The company quality committee shall require internal reviews of the Design Centers operation to assure that the policies and procedures of the Design Centers operations quality system are met. The reviewer shall be trained and from outside the Design Centers operation. These reviews shall be documented. When deficiencies in the operation of the quality system are identified, steps to correct any nonconformance shall be taken in a timely manner. Frequency and scope of internal reviews shall be sufficient to assure the effectiveness of the quality system, but shall be conducted at least twice each year.

Evidence we are looking for.

Describe the conduct of any current internal review, training requirements of your internal auditor, frequency of your audits, the record of your findings, who develops action plan to remedy deficiencies, and how implementation of the plan is reviewed to see if they meet the standard. Describe way you might confirm that all the aspects of your Design Center operations quality plan are complied with.

Describe what you presently have in place.

Identify any gaps and what you need to do or add to meet all of the NHQ requirements.