



Case study:

ISO/IEC 19770-1 certification Softline Group Northern Europe

Leading ITAM consultancy company Softline Group Northern Europe was determined to be the first company in the world to gain ISO 19770-1 certification. So, that's exactly what it did.

The Opportunity

Softline Group Northern Europe jumped at the chance to gain ISO/IEC 19770-1 certification. What's more, it wanted to be the first in the world.

Ash Dharas, Managing Consultant and ITAM Practice Manager at Softline Group Northern Europe stated, "Gaining ISO 19770-1 certification was imperative for us. The moment the certification scheme came to market, ITAM Forum Patrons were challenged to attain certification to show their commitment to the ISO ITAM standard. It was at that moment, Dennis Montanje set the goal for Softline Group Northern Europe to be the first. While our ITAM services are modelled on the standard, I knew that going through the certification process would be invaluable. Only by genuinely practicing what we preach, could we demonstrate our knowledge and expertise to clients."

The certification process

The certification process consists of three main steps with specific milestones that need to be met in order to progress to the next step.



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Ash Dharas, Managing Consultant and ITAM Practice Manager,
Softline Group Northern Europe

It starts with a preparation stage, where Brand Compliance (the scheme's official auditor) conducts a Gap Analysis of the company's management system (ISO/IEC 19970-1 is a management system standard) in order to highlight any deficiencies that need to be resolved to meet the requirements. This is the part of the project that had the biggest impact on Softline Group Northern Europe, since it was the impetus for the company implementing a company-wide management system for the first time. The ISO standard is typically designed for organisations much larger than Softline Group Northern Europe (usually for those with a minimum of 5,000+ users) so the entire process represented a significant "belts and braces" approach for Softline Group Northern Europe and resulted in a level of process maturity far beyond the level you would expect from a company of its size.

Step 2, the Initial Audit, is comprised of two stages. The first stage assesses the documentation of the company's management system, with any gaps highlighted. The next stage is an audit of how effective the company's management system is, in practice, and how well it was implemented and is managed.

The entire process took Softline about nine months from the initial consultation through to certification.

Commenting on the audit experience, Ash stated, "The certification journey was

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tough, ultimately because I manage a team of process consultants as my day job and had to fit the certification around this; however, it was a very enlightening journey and well worth the effort. Connecting with different stakeholders to gain insights just like with any ITAM program takes time and effort. Our customers (typically 5,000+ staff members) are the typical client size that would embark on this ITAM journey. Since Softline is not one of these typical organisations (we are much smaller), the amount of time required for us was less. The program took about 8-9 months to fully set up and become business as usual, but typically speaking, this can take 12-18 months."

Certification Benefits

For Ash, obtaining ISO 19770-1 certification is all about Softline's clients – "Softline is a strong believer in practicing what you preach. Going through the certification process was a unique opportunity to understand the certification process first-hand. This enables us to be more effective when helping our clients with their certification journey. For us, the key change was the implementation of a management system, which is the core to any ITAM program and the foundation for ISO/IEC 19770-1 certification."

"Going through the certification process is not easy. It is a humbling experience, but it ultimately improves the quality of your ITAM practices. As more companies go through the certification process, I believe it will become a de facto standard, alongside ISO 9001 and 27001, that every company will pursue as a matter of course. This will help to elevate the status and maturity of ITAM as a profession and provide a path for more ITAM professionals to contribute to their organisation's strategic priorities. At the coal face, participating in ISO 19770-1 certification ensures your ITAM processes are world-class."

Obtaining ISO 19770-1 certification is clearly a competitive advantage for Softline, which Ash is keen to leverage.

“Having been through the process ourselves, clients are now asking us for help with their own ISO certification journey. Having this quality stamp is creating new opportunities for us.”

Looking beyond its clients, Ash says certification has delivered Softline numerous, internal benefits – “Despite our many years of experience delivering ISO ITAM processes to our clients, this journey was a learning curve for us. It was a humbling experience that has led to improvements in our processes and governance and has made us more efficient as an organisation.”

ISO/IEC 19770-1 certification is valid for three years. To maintain its compliance, Softline must participate in annual surveillance audits before re-certification is required in three years’ time.

Advice for others

Ash finished with some advice for other organisations considering their own ISO 19770-1 certification journey:

“Just do it. The benefits will more than cover the effort of the process. What’s more, if you have already been through the process of implementing a management system, which is compliant with other major ISO standards such as ISO 27001, you will already be halfway there. The same system can be utilised towards your ISO 19770-1 efforts.”

“You must not underestimate the importance of senior buy-in. We were lucky because our Executive VP Dennis Montanje accepted the challenge on our behalf, so we had senior management support from the start. This made collaboration with other departments and ITAM stakeholders much easier because everyone supported the mission. The lack of senior buy-in is one of the most common challenges faced by our clients when it comes to embarking on their ITAM journeys. Given how much weight the ISO certification process puts on verifying stakeholder support, I recommend you secure this before seeking ISO 19770-1 certification.”

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“Lastly, you shouldn’t underestimate the time it takes to comply with ISO standards and to then demonstrate compliance. It’s a long journey with no shortcuts. Even if you consider your processes to be pretty good, you need to be prepared to put in the hard work to demonstrate this to the auditor. Remember, doing something well and demonstrating this to someone else are two entirely different things. I thought I knew a lot about the ITAM journey but learnt many things going through this process.”



About Softline Group Northern Europe

Softline Group is part of Noventiq. It delivers expertise and services in the domains of IT Asset Management, Application Modernisation, Cloud Transformation and Management, and FinOps. Softline's many years of expertise in ITAM resulted in recognition by Gartner as "Visionary" in the 2022 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for SAM Managed Services. Since 2010, Softline has conducted numerous ITAM assessments with its clients. During this time, Softline Group has aligned its services directly to ISO/IEC 19770-1 to demonstrate its commitment to the highest ITAM standard.

The company's Executive Vice President, Dennis Montanje, is also a member of the ISO ITAM Standards Committee (the voluntary committee that develops the ISO 19770 family of standards), and he leads the ITAM Forum's Committee of Experts, the group of volunteers that formulated what the certification scheme would look like and how conformity would be assessed.

softline-group.co.uk



About the ITAM Forum

The ITAM Forum is a global trade body for the advancement of the IT Asset Management industry. We are a not-for-profit membership organisation, led by ITAM professionals for ITAM professionals. Our members are passionate about IT Asset Management and the business value it brings to companies regardless of size and industry.

The ITAM Forum has two primary objectives:

1. To elevate the position of ITAM by sharing knowledge and best practices that focus on business value and aid to grow the profession.
2. To create – and be a caretaker of – the new ISO 19770 standard certification program so organisations can demonstrate the quality of their ITAM practices.

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