BACKGROUND

Licence Check Limited (Licence Check) was established in 2008 by its Managing Director, Richard Brown, with the objective of providing a high quality online driving licence checking and monitoring service through its Driver Licence Verification Service (DLVS). This service is now used by many companies and organisations throughout the UK. Licence Check, with its dynamic and fast growing team, operates from its headquarters in Nottingham.

In November 2014, Licence Check achieved certification to ISO 27001, the International Standard for Information Security Management, just 4 months after starting the process. This case study highlights the business drivers that motivated Licence Check to secure certification to this Standard, key success criteria for the project and the benefits that have been realised.

Richard Brown, Managing Director at
Licence Check Limited

Business Drivers

In order to provide licence checking and monitoring services, Licence Check is required to work with the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) and manage significant volumes of personal data and private client employee information via DLVS. As part of its contract with DVLA, the company was already working towards ISO 27001 standards under the DVLA Code of Conduct (CoCo) requirements, but Licence Check recognised that a formal certification of a 'best practice' information security management system (ISMS) was becoming increasingly important, both to support the requirements of the DVLA and equally to address the concerns of new and existing clients. Achieving certification to ISO 27001 was also identified as a key requirement in securing new contracts within the public sector and with blue chip clients.

As Richard Brown explains, "At Licence Check we are continually looking to improve and streamline our services and this requires us to work closely with key information suppliers, such as the DVLA. In order to provide the necessary reassurances to these suppliers, Licence Check needs to demonstrate a 'best practice' approach to information security management. Securing certification to ISO 27001 provides positive proof to our information providers that we meet or exceed their contractual and compliance requirements. Equally though, we have always appreciated the importance of the security of employee information from a client perspective and have always recognised the need to implement good practice in line with ISO 27001 around protecting personal data. We have also observed more clients citing ISO 27001 as a pre-requisite of engagement and achieving certification became an obvious next step in the company's development cycle."

When Richard started to research the certification process, he quickly recognised that engaging with a certification body (CB) accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Services (UKAS) would enhance the value of its ISO 27001 certification. Richard adds "We were aware that a number of our competitors have secured ISO 27001 certification with 'non-UKAS' accredited certification bodies and were convinced that seeking certification with a fully UK accredited body would provide a differential which our clients would increasingly recognise and value."

KEY ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

ISO 27001 Seminar

Having determined that securing ISO 27001 certification was a business priority, Richard was keen to engage the support of a third party organisation to assist Licence Check to achieve its goal. This was the first ISO Standard to be implemented by the company and Richard wanted to benefit from experienced consultants who would help Licence Check to meet its goal against a very aggressive timescale. With this in mind, Richard and IT Manager Kevin Birch, attended a seminar on 'How to secure ISO 27001 certification' which was co-hosted by Ultima Risk Management (URM) and a UKAS accredited CB. Richard comments "The seminar was invaluable in clarifying the requirements of the Standard and the activities that would need to be addressed to enable us to secure and maintain ISO 27001 certification. It was very reassuring to hear that URM, as the provider of consultancy services and the certification body were fully aligned in their presentations as to what is needed in order to satisfy the Standard's requirements and implement a value-added information security management system."

ISO 27001 Health Check

Having attended the seminar, Licence Check took up URM's offer to conduct an ISO 27001 Health Check. The objective of the Health Check was for one of URM's senior consultants to bench mark the Company's existing information security policies and processes against the requirements of the Standard. The Health Check helped identify those areas where beneficial improvements could be made and also the effort and resources required in order to achieve certification. Whilst some modifications to certain existing processes were required to put an ISO compliant management system in place, the Company was encouraged by URM's consultant who assured it that the implementation of an ISMS would not be unduly onerous and would be proportionate with the company's existing operational activity.

Consultancy Support

Having attended the seminar and undertaken the Health Check, Richard was confident that URM had sufficient knowledge of Licence Check and the expertise (with regard to the Standard and its appropriate implementation) to guide the company through to certification. Richard adds, "A significant concern for us at the start was that by implementing ISO 27001, we would end up with something that was going to be expensive, bureaucratic and labour

intensive to maintain, but URM allayed our fears at the Health Check." Key areas of support provided by URM during the project included:

- Conducting a fully ISO 27001-compliant information security risk assessment using Abriska (URM's purpose designed risk management tool)
- Assisting Licence Check to establish clear and robust information security related policies and procedures
- Establishing an ISMS framework including internal audits and management reviews
- Supporting the development of an awareness training programme
- Liaising with the chosen CB to secure suitable Stage 1 and 2 assessment dates.

Richard believes URM's input and pragmatic approach were key to achieving certification in such an aggressive time frame and comments "The support of URM's consultant in explaining the specific objectives and terminology associated with ISO 27001 was invaluable. Being able to access experienced, expert support as and when required was critical to the project's success. You don't know what you don't know."

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Senior Management Leadership and Commitment

Whilst Licence Check relied on URM to provide expertise in clarifying the expectations of ISO 27001, equally important was the need to maintain a culture where staff recognised the importance of information security management within all aspects of operational activity. As Managing Director of the organisation, Richard played a pivotal role in raising the awareness of information security management. Having attended the 'How to secure ISO 27001 certification' seminar himself, Richard started the ISO 27001 journey by returning to his office and immediately resolved to make changes to some existing practices. Introducing these changes had an immediate beneficial impact on all staff and highlighted the importance of following best practice in information security management.

Open Culture

A key feature of the Company's operation are the weekly 'Toolbox Talks' meetings where all staff regularly meet to discuss any operational issues, processes and challenges along with ways of overcoming them and building appropriate checks and monitors into the management system. As Richard explains "The Toolbox meetings provide the ideal forum for discussing all aspects of the ISO 27001 implementation project, not just what we need to do but why. We have been able to discuss various outputs from each stage of the process such as the risk assessment reports and the implementation of specific information security / data protection policies and procedures. Central to our Company ethos is a very open working culture where all staff are actively encouraged to question and suggest improvements to all aspects of the company's service delivery. This openness has been pivotal in embedding the policies, processes and practices associated with Licence Check's ISMS quickly. Not only were staff familiar with what new policies and processes were being introduced but, more importantly, why they were being introduced."

■■ KEY BENEFITS DERIVED FROM ISO 27001 CERTIFICATION

In addition to directly addressing the information security requirements of key information suppliers and a growing number of existing and potential clients, Licence Check is confident that it has an ISMS which is scalable and can be further developed to support future growth, along with maintaining an information security aware culture. Richard expands "The journey so far has provided us with a clear understanding of the information security risks associated with our operational activity and, with URM's support, we have been able to sensibly manage and mitigate these risks to an appropriate and acceptable level. We also have greater formalisation around our practices and visibility of risk, providing a platform for growth and an ISMS which all staff have fully bought into and understand through our engagement process. However, we also recognise that this is an ongoing journey and securing certification is just the first step. Our longer term objective is to continually improve how we protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information and ensure our practices remain aligned with our business objectives and the needs of our clients."

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Richard Brown, Managing Director at Licence Check Limited

Following successful certification and being impressed by the quality of the service and support received from URM, Richard is now keen to implement further improvements at Licence Check and is looking to achieve certification to ISO 22301, the International Standard for Business Continuity Management, in the very near future.

LICENCECHECK
driving licence verification

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