



AIDING LEADING EXPERIENTIAL AGENCY OBTAIN SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION

CASE STUDY

BE THE BENCHMARK

SGS

Ignition is a multi-award-winning, strategic creative agency with offices in Bristol, UK and Indianapolis, USA. It specializes in the design and production of exceptional exhibitions, events and experiences around the world - whether in person, virtual or a hybrid combination of both. The company has 17 employees and also works with partners and contractor companies to deliver specialist services. Ignition forms part of the Istoria Group, a collective of collaborative creative agencies whose additional specialisms include retail and hospitality design, strategic communications and innovation management.

Last year, Ignition delivered 344 projects in 20 different countries across 4 continents with a 100% success rate, for clients across multiple industry sectors, including defense, aerospace, technology, pharmaceutical, health and education.

The company was founded in 2007 on the principle of creating a different kind of company that balances people and planet with profit whilst delivering great work to clients. Ignition has won many coveted awards including Sustainable Organisation of the Year, Best Employer, Creative Agency of the Year and The Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development.



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WHY DID IGNITION SEEK ISO 20121 CERTIFICATION?

Istoria Group's Chairwoman and Founder Claire Menzies is passionate about sustainability and sustainable thinking is embedded in the culture of the Group and its constituent companies. Claire Menzies was one of the first members of the British Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) and helped pioneer the first Sustainable Exhibitions Industry Report in 2002. She is a Non-Executive Director of International Synergies, leaders in circular economy development, which led to a seat on the Temporary Materials Forum for the London Olympics 2012 Steering Committee. Here, she helped to create the world's first ever zero waste to landfill Games.

Unsurprisingly, Claire Menzies also wanted her own company to gain the ISO 20121 certification for event sustainability management, becoming the first exhibitions, events and experiential agency to do so.

Istoria Group Business Manager Hannah Jardine says: "We've always been against 'build and burn' in the industry, and the culture of automatic landfill waste. As an example, our exhibition kits are re-usable and recyclable, often lasting for ten years or more. Our ethos of sustainability extends to all employees as well as our clients and partners.

"Retaining our certification to ISO 20121 would effectively 'rubber stamp' our ethos and credentials."

HOW CERTIFICATION HAS BENEFITTED THE ORGANIZATION

With sustainability now so high on the global business agenda, certification to the standard has paid considerable dividends for both Ignition and its customers.

It has measurably helped to gain new business, and everybody in the business is justifiably proud of having achieved and maintained certification.

The standard also encompasses wellbeing and so the company's already advanced policies around mental health and flexibility have been formally recognized. This element of the standard also acknowledges the charity work carried out by the company in developing countries.

Ignition is also very keen to pass its ethos on, up and down the supply chain. Suppliers are reviewed for sustainability and our policies are shared with them annually. This helps these businesses, in turn, achieve their own sustainability goals and supports their own new business activity.

Customers also benefit financially from the cost savings resulting from Ignition's and their own improved sustainability performance.

Hannah Jardine says: "The ISO 20121 standard makes us think about our processes. It makes us a better company."

At the time of writing, Ignition has achieved carbon neutrality in Tiers 1 and 2 and is working towards becoming carbon negative. Certification for the wider Istoria Group is also under consideration.

On working with SGS, Jardine comments: "I took over managing our ISO certification several years ago, and in my experience, SGS has always been great to work with. I feel that they're there to help us, and not trip us up.

"In working with SGS, we also enjoy consistency, so we don't have to go over the same thing repeatedly. They really know our business."

WHY SGS?

Istoria Group had previously worked with SGS United Kingdom Ltd to gain certification for the ISO 9001 and 14001 standards and had found the company to be highly professional and supportive.

THE PROCESS

Such were the culture and existing processes within the group, that according to Hannah Jardine, the process was straightforward. "The standard fitted what we were already doing," she noted.

The fact that SGS was already familiar with the group's business and how it worked was beneficial in the audit process – from the initial gap analysis through to the final audit six months later, in which no issues were highlighted. Universal buy-in within the company also aided the certification process for both Ignition and the SGS auditor.

In common with other ISO standards, full re-certification is carried out every three years, a process which lasts two days. Surveillance audits take place annually. At the time of writing this case study, these annual, two-day audits are conducted virtually, owing to restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Hannah Jardine
Istoria Group Business Manager



ISO 20121

ISO 20121 is a management system standard that has been designed to help organizations in the events industry improve the sustainability of their event related activities, products and services.

ISO 20121 is based on the earlier British Standard called 'BS 8901 Specification for a Sustainability Management System for Events' which was first developed in 2007. Due to the high-level interest in BS 8901, the decision was made to create an international version of the standard to coincide with the London 2012 Olympics.

In simple terms, ISO 20121 describes the building blocks of a management system that will help any event related organization to:

- Continue to be financially successful
- Become more socially responsible
- Reduce its environmental footprint

ISO 20121 applies to all types and sizes of organization involved in the events industry – from caterers, lighting and sound engineers, security companies, stage builders and venues to independent event organizers and corporate and public sector event teams.

ABOUT SGS

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognised as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 89,000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 2,600 offices and laboratories around the world.

We provide competitive advantage, drive sustainability and deliver trust. At SGS, we are continually pushing ourselves to deliver innovative services and solutions that help our customers move their businesses forward.

Efficiency and cost-optimization are no longer the sole drivers in business development strategies. Successful businesses recognize the importance of offering their workforce continuous development and training. Motivated and effective teams create industry leaders.

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WHEN YOU NEED TO BE SURE

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