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Trust in Manufacturers, Sellers and Products

Compliance, Product Performance and Quality Management

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Every manufacturer must know its product.

This includes its characteristics, its performance and all the requirements it must meet.

Customers, sellers, importers and authorities expect a manufacturer to know its product. They expect the manufacturer to understand the applicable requirements and take responsibility for the quality of its work.

This knowledge is the basis for trust in the manufacturer, the seller, the brand and the product.

Three areas are central to building that trust: compliance, product performance, and the quality of the manufacturer and its products.

1. Compliance: Know the product and its requirements

The manufacturer must know which legal and regulatory requirements apply to its product and how compliance with them is demonstrated.

Depending on the product, these may include safety requirements, conformity assessment, technical documentation and marking.

Knowing your product means knowing the requirements it must meet.

This knowledge is the basis for lawful market access and cooperation with customers and business partners.

EU legislation assigns obligations to manufacturers, importers, distributors and—depending on the legislation—to other economic operators. A manufacturer must know all obligations that relate to its products, regardless of how roles are divided along the supply chain. If it does not know the applicable requirements, it cannot reliably support its customers or other business partners. It is equally important to communicate clearly which requirements have been met and where the customer still needs to take action.

> *Note: The EU Declaration of Conformity records the manufacturer's declaration that the product complies with the applicable EU legislation. It should be based on an informed assessment of the requirements relevant to that product. A manufacturer's lack of knowledge may be interpreted by the market as a lack of capability or a quality problem.*

2. Product performance: Know what the product can actually do

A manufacturer must know more than the applicable rules. It must also understand how its product works, what performance it delivers and what value it provides to customers.

Comparative consumer tests assess products against defined criteria. In addition to performance and practical usefulness, assessments may consider compliance, durability and other product characteristics.

Test results published by the media influence purchasing decisions and therefore sales. The same applies to customer reviews and star ratings on Amazon.

A good product meets the applicable requirements and convinces customers through its actual performance.

Product performance is not an optional extra; it is an obligation. Legally required performance requirements, as well as expressly or implicitly warranted characteristics, must be met.

That is a foundation for customer satisfaction.

> Note: Consumer-test criteria can often be traced back to the product's intended use and performance claims. This principle is also reflected in Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC, Annex I, point 1.1.2: "Machinery must be designed and constructed so that it is fit for its function." The applicable legal basis depends on the product and the legislation in force.

3. Quality management: Embed knowledge in the business

Product knowledge alone is not enough. The company must put that knowledge into practice in development, purchasing, production and service.

The ambition to develop a product that competes successfully and performs well in comparative consumer tests must be considered from the outset of product development or product selection.

Even after start of production (SOP), targeted, small changes can make a difference. Sometimes cost-neutral changes can improve product performance and significantly improve results in comparative consumer tests.

Quality management establishes the processes and responsibilities that enable such improvements and support consistent quality.

Without reliable processes, product quality and customer satisfaction are left to chance.

4. Three areas, one connected approach

Compliance, product performance and quality management must not be handled in isolation. They need to be planned and assessed together, with risks and trade-offs evaluated.

This requires a clear classification of requirements and shared checklists. A common requirements specification and product specification should bring together the interests of marketing, engineering and legal teams, making conflicts visible. A joint risk assessment must consider not only technical and legal risks, but also costs, market opportunities and commercial consequences.

> **Let's be honest: no one brings a product to market simply to be compliant. The goal is to make money.**

Compliance is not an end in itself. It must be considered alongside product performance, quality, cost and customer value so that a compliant product can also become a commercially successful one.

A competent EU Authorised Representative (EU Rep) can do far more than provide an EU address. Depending on the applicable legislation and the mandate, the representative can support the manufacturer in connecting regulatory requirements, technical evidence and the practical conditions for EU market access. The key is to understand not only the documents, but also the product and the business model.

> **The goal is not to tick off as many requirements as possible. The goal is to bring a product to market that meets the necessary requirements, convinces customers and makes commercial sense.**

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