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- Right.

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- [Narrator] You're listening to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast". Join Michael Holtz and his guests for conversations about all things ORAU. They'll talk about ORAU story history, our impact on an ever changing world, our innovative scientific and technical solutions for our customers, and our commitment to the communities where we do business. Welcome to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast".

- Happy Wednesday and welcome to another episode of "Further Together The ORAU Podcast". I'm Michael Holtz, your host and today, I have a great guest. She's actually a return guest, Kristy Kistner, the quality queen. I'm just gonna say, the quality queen here at ORAU and she is gonna talk a little bit about a presentation that she has upcoming that I love the title of. We'll get to that in a minute, but Kristy Kistner, welcome back to the ORAU Podcast.

- Thank you, Michael.

- Tell us again who you are.

- Okay, like Michael said, my name's Kristy Kistner. I like quality queen. My official title is Director of Performance Excellence, and at ORAU we have a group that's called the Resource Center for Performance Excellence, and the way I summarize our mission is we provide tools to others within the company so they can do awesome work. Basically, it's a combination of an office of quality and product management office.

- Gotcha, and one of the processes that you and your office is in charge of is our ISO 9000 process and auditing and because of all things pandemic, our most recent audits I believe were done for virtually, and you were about to give a presentation at the ISO 9000 and Audits World Conference later this month and you're giving a presentation that I just love the name of, practical tips to rock your virtual audit. So Kristy Kistner, talk about virtual audits and how to rock your audit.

- Well, lemme give you a little background first about what ISO 9001 is. ORAU is registered to the standard and it's basically a quality management standard that's a set of best practices for achieving quality, and quality is meeting customer expectations. That's what it comes to down to, basically and quality management system is a set of processes and policies, procedures, et cetera, that make sure that an organization is able to achieve its quality objectives and satisfy customers.

- Right.

- So with that background, that takes me to audits. Each year, when you are registered to ISO 9001, there is an audit. There's either the registration audits, which is what I call the full size audits, that's to make sure that you're meeting all of the requirements of the standard. And then the surveillance audits, I call that the fun-size audits, that just looks at a section of the standard to just verify that you're continuing to maintain your quality management system.

- Okay.

- And when you're first going for registration, you go through the full audits and then every year, you have a surveillance audit, then a second one, and the third year, you have a re-registration audit. Since ORAU was registered in 2013, I had been through 10 audits all in person and then there was COVID.

- Right.

- And we were getting ready in 2020 for a surveillance audit in August, and then we all started working from home, and what we had to do was figure out how do we transition from in person, which is how we'd always done it, to virtual, and some of it, it's pretty straightforward. I mean, the purpose of the audit is to make sure that we are complying with the standard. That doesn't change in person or virtual, but some of the planning does change. Since we've done this two years in a row and we're still unsure about what's happening this August.

- Sure.

- When the ISO 9000 and Audits World Conference came up, one of their focus areas was the future of virtual audits. I submitted a proposal because we can share information that we've learned from having to implement this transition and do it better the second time when we had to do it again last year.

- Right, okay. So how... I can only imagine that the preparation is different. You've mentioned that a little bit. So how do you, tee up for a virtual audit as opposed to how you might do that in a world where you would normally have that meeting in person?

- Usually, the way we start out, honestly, when we're in the midst of the audit, we're thinking about next year's audit.

- Okay.

- I'm thinking about it from day one of each audit.

- Gotcha.

- Because what we're trying to do is present evidence to our external auditor that we are meeting the requirements of the standard.

- Okay.

- Ideally, the auditor and the organization who's being audited are forming a partnership because the purpose of the audit is not for the auditor to come get you.

- Right.

- Lots of people are worried about it and they're not looking forward to the auditor showing up, but they're not there to show you how you're messing everything up. They're there to find evidence that you're meeting the standard. So the best approach is to be ready to provide that evidence, and I always try and make sure to the extent possible that people around the organization aren't terrified of this audit. Nobody believes me, I think, but it really is an opportunity for us to learn about where we need to improve and if we have findings, okay, well, you got somebody from outside the organization to show you a place that maybe you didn't realize you needed to improve. So when we're starting to prepare, I have a spreadsheet. Those who know me at ORAU know that I am the queen of the clauses-

- You are the queen of the spreadsheets.

- I am known for this, but I have a spreadsheet of the clauses of the standard and the way I plan for the audits is to figure out what things we can present as evidence that meet the specific clauses of the standard, and the same thing happens for virtual audits.

- Okay.

- That you're looking to do that, but some of the aspects that would differ. So for instance, for audit planning, it's all pretty much the same.

- Right, okay.

- But you might have something like people might be in different time zones. For instance, we have some people who are in Colorado.

- Right.

- You'd have to make sure, honestly, it's for both in person and virtual, that you don't schedule them for an 8:00 AM meeting. That's not gonna go well 'cause it's 6:00 AM there. Preparation always includes the spreadsheet I talked about, but one of the things we've found out over the years is that people do better if they're able to see what others are going to be presenting because then they can say, "Okay, like someone so said to you, here's something we're doing related to the strategic plan." We're able to show the interconnectedness of the processes and how we are in fact meeting and complying with the standard.

- Gotcha.

- An area that is very different for a virtual audit as you can imagine is managing technology.

- Sure, absolutely.

- You have to do that during an in person audit because when you have a PowerPoint, if you've got somebody who's calling in remotely, you have to manage that, but when you're doing it virtually, there are so many more factors to it. One of the things that we had to work out was the idea of, if you're in a room together, you go around the table and introduce yourself. In a virtual audit, there is no table.

- Right.

- So we had to think about how do we introduce around the table? And the way that we came up with was we figured out who was going to be speaking and then I introduced all of them. Everybody shared a bio with me, I introduced all of them, and then I got the special privilege of telling everyone else, "Don't speak, just listen."

- That makes sense.

- And the first time we did this remotely, because of connectivity fears, I said, "Okay, everybody leave your camera off." But it was really unnerving for the auditor because it's like this disembodied voice speaking and you don't get the visual clues.

- Right.

- So the second year we told people, "If you're speaking, turn on your camera," and that worked quite a bit better.

- Little less awkward.

- Exactly.

- For everybody, yeah.

- Another aspect that it's somewhat the same for both in person and virtual, we've got like day long meetings but there are different people coming in, and the question of what if we're running late in meeting A, how do we let somebody in meeting B know? And usually, I would just, you know, I'd have my phone here and I can text it to tell people.

- Five minutes away or whatever.

- Yes, or don't come in yet or frankly, if the meeting wasn't going well, yes, please come on time.

- It's time, yes.

- Yes please, save us. But now that we're using Microsoft Teams, I just send them a text message.

- Right.

- Another thing related to technology that we had to cope with is getting people to not use Teams' chats during the meeting because you might run into a situation where somebody, no one would ever do this, but is making a snide comment.

- Right.

- You wanna make sure that the auditor doesn't see that in the chat.

- Exactly, yes.

- What we did was provided a job aid for how to set up a separate chat window so you know you're not putting something in the audit Team-

- The meeting chat, yeah.

- You're putting it in a separate chat.

- Right, okay.

- And knock on wood, we haven't had anybody do that.

- Let's hope that streak continues.

- I'm hoping.

- So you've done the virtual audit a couple of times and now, you're presenting at the ISO 9000 and Audits World Conference, and you're doing a how to rock your virtual audit presentation. I know you've shared some of the lessons that you've learned, what are you gonna, how are you gonna help people rock their audits, and I realize you don't want to give away all of the secret sauce on the podcast 'cause you obviously want people to tune in but talk a little bit about your presentation and what you're gonna share/

- Thanks, Michael. Well, I'm going to do it very similar to the way I've talked about it here. I'm gonna start out with in person audits, virtual audits, but there are a lot of things that are really the same. First, I'll give some backgrounds about things like why are their audits and emphasize it's not so the auditor can come and zing you on something. They're not out to get you. It really is a partner. Then talk about the effects of COVID-19 and the transition, and then get into things like audit planning starting with what's it like for in person. For instance, don't schedule it during the board of directors meeting for your company. That results in major issues, especially you need the leadership to be talking about how we do the standard, and well, they have to go to the board of directors meeting. It was really challenging. We did this early on. That was probably about 10 years ago, but I've never forgotten.

- Lesson learned forever.

- Yes, and then things that are specific to virtual audits.

- Okay.

- I'll talk about of course, managing technology, and there's an aspect of that for in person, you have the PowerPoints, you have people joining, but there's so much more when you're doing this virtually.

- Sure.

- And then we'll also talk about communications both during, before, and after the audits, avoiding interrupting each other during the meeting, time management during the meeting, and I'll be concluding with what's next. For instance, I already said I don't know what we're doing for this year's audits. It's going to be in August. Is it in person, is it virtual, is it hybrid? At the moment, we're just planning for both.

- Okay.

- And I will also be providing people with what I've called a virtual audit tip list. Just some stuff to think about, have you considered this, have you considered this so that people can apply those things going forward

- Excellent, it sounds like it will be a very helpful presentation for folks who are living in this virtual audit world and like you said, I mean this year, who knows? Is it virtual, is it in person, is it both? Is it, you know, is it on the moon? Is it... All of those things. So it sounds like you are gonna help people rock their audits.

- That's my intent.

- I love it. Well, is there anything I haven't asked you that you wanna make sure that we cover before we close things down?

- Tough question, but I can't really think of anything else.

- Okay, great. Well Kristy, I know that there are people who are looking forward to hearing you at the ISO 9000 and Audits World Conference that's coming up at the end of the month. It's the 28th and 29th, right?

- Yes, that's correct. That is scheduled for the 28th and 29th of March, and you can still register for it if you'd like to. It is 100% virtual.

- Sweet, so if you're an ISO 9000 fan, if you're a queen of quality for your organization, sign up and listen to our queen of quality talk about how to rock your virtual audit. Kristy Kistner, thank you so much for your time today, I appreciate it.

- You very much, Michael, and I will interject one other thing that you can include here.

- Okay.

- If you are able to register and attend my speech, you'll get to hear my intro where I talk about being on a very senior level government project that included the words Kristy, you're not on mute.

- Excellent, so there's a little extra bonus for everyone who tunes in and registers for Kristy's talk. Kristy, thank you again.

- Yes, thank you. Thanks for having me.

- Absolutely, thank you everyone for listening. We'll see you next Wednesday.

- [Narrator] Thank you for listening to "Further Together The ORAU Podcast". To learn more about any of the topics discussed by our experts, visit www.orau.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, @ORAU and on Instagram @ORAUTOGETHER. If you like "Further Together The ORAU Podcast", we'd appreciate you giving us a review on your favorite podcast platform. Your reviews will help more people find the podcast.