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Built to Standard: ISO for Tradies

Webinar Summary & Key Takeaways

Wednesday, 4 November 2026 | Microsoft Teams | Hosted by Mandar Vaze, Trans4m Business Consulting

Panel: John Megalli (HVAC, J&J Metro Air Conditioning) • Jonathan Davies (Director, Hexar Solutions) • Johnny Tran (Founder & Managing Director, Ascent Certification) • Jacqui Jones (Founder & CEO, Way We Do)

This session brought together two trade business owners who have lived the ISO journey, a certification auditor, and a technology platform founder, to answer one practical question: what can ISO actually do for a construction or trade business. Rather than working through the clauses of the standard, the panel spoke from direct experience about why they pursued ISO, what changed once they did, what actually happens during an audit, and how technology is making day to day compliance manageable for businesses of any size.

Why ISO Matters for Trade Businesses

Mandar opened by framing ISO as more than a certificate on the wall. As a business grows, the owner typically ends up doing everything: quoting the job, winning the job, running the team, and fielding every problem personally. Good systems are what let a business scale past that point. An ISO accreditation can double as a credibility and marketing tool, and it is increasingly a hard requirement for tendering with larger contractors, councils and government bodies.

Two Journeys to Certification

John Megalli *HVAC, J&J Metro Air Conditioning*

John has held ISO accreditation for around eight years. He pursued it to do less in the business personally and build structures that gave him freedom: “We realised I'm trying to do less in the business and focus on certain things, put systems and structures in place, to give me more freedom.” Implementation wasn't smooth at the start, including having to deal with a staff member forging documents, and more recently losing team members who wouldn't comply with new safety procedures, but he's firm on the trade-off: “it's non-negotiable, it's very simple.” Today he credits ISO with freeing his time for client relationships, mentoring other tradies, and stepping back from day to day operations into a more strategic role.

Jonathan Davies *Director, Hexar Solutions*

Jonathan built ISO into Hexar Solutions from day one, a lesson learned from watching his father's business operate without proper systems. While being mentored early on, he realised the structure he was being taught was essentially ISO, and reached out to Jacqui Jones to implement Way We Do

as the backbone. He has since built his own internal dashboard pulling every system in the business into a single view per employee, so gaps (a missed timesheet, an overdue form) surface immediately rather than weeks later. His team now calls the standardised way of doing things simply "the Hexa way."

Behind the Audit: the Auditor's Perspective

Johnny Tran *Founder & Managing Director, Ascent Certification*

Johnny has worked as an auditor for 25 years. He described an ISO audit in two stages: Stage One is typically a remote review of the documented management system and a check of readiness; Stage Two happens on site, where the auditor interviews staff, reviews records and observes work in progress. In his words, "stage one is, say, I'm doing this, stage two is, I'm actually doing it." The most common gap he finds is not missing paperwork, but a disconnect between what's documented and what's actually followed on the ground.

On the fear many tradies have of failing an audit outright, Johnny was direct: a finding does not automatically mean a failed audit. Issues are classified as a major nonconformance (a serious issue casting real doubt on whether the system works), a minor nonconformance (a more contained issue), or simply an observation (an improvement opportunity with no impact on certification). Businesses get the opportunity to respond with corrective action before any final certification decision is made. He also prefers the word "assessment" to "audit" for exactly this reason, it's a collaborative process, not a pass or fail exam.

Making Compliance Sustainable with Technology

Jacqui Jones *Founder & CEO, Way We Do*

Jacqui spoke to the role of technology in keeping ISO sustainable day to day. The problem she originally set out to solve was fragmentation, policies and procedures scattered across SharePoint, Google Drive, email and spreadsheets. An integrated platform gives those documents one controlled home with proper version control, a core ISO requirement, and, increasingly important in an AI-driven workplace, a single trusted source of truth: "if you have it scattered across folders, then the AI gets confused, so not only do your people get confused, your AI gets confused as well." Beyond storage, she described using AI-assisted tools to capture evidence as work happens, recording a process on video on site and having it documented step by step automatically, so businesses aren't scrambling for proof when the auditor arrives.

Busting the Myths

- "Too complicated, too much paperwork." John Megalli's answer: growth and profitability require proper systems; the goal is accountability, not admin for its own sake.

- "I'd need a full-time person I can't afford." Jonathan Davies treats his full-time QMS hire plus a VA as an ongoing investment, not a one-off cost. John Megalli agreed that past a certain size, dedicating someone, especially for safety, protects the business against far larger risks, citing WorkCover fines he's seen run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- "ISO will tell me how to run my business." Johnny Tran and Mandar both pushed back: ISO doesn't dictate operations, it documents how you already work and holds you to it. The one genuine non-negotiable, John Megalli noted, is safety, and that's government regulation, not ISO itself.
- "It's only for big companies." Jacqui Jones shared the story of a sole operator who needed certification purely because his only client, a council, changed its tender rules; a one-person business just needs a system sized for one person. John Megalli's advice to every tradie he mentors: "start systemising it from now, even if you're a man in a van with one apprentice."

The Numbers

Mandar closed with figures from a global ISO survey: businesses typically see around $6 in revenue and $3 in profit for every $1 invested in ISO, with the investment paying back within two to two and a half years. Johnny added that there are currently more than 32,500 active ISO certifications in Australia, and that Trans4m can help identify who in a given industry is already certified.

Key Takeaways

ISO is a growth and scaling tool first, a certificate second, it's what lets an owner stop being the bottleneck in their own business.

A failed finding is rarely the end of the story: audits classify issues as major, minor or observation, and businesses get the chance to fix them.

An integrated platform turns ISO from a once-a-year scramble into evidence that's captured as the work happens.

Business size is not a barrier: the right-sized system works for a sole trader and a twenty-five-person crew alike.

The real payoff is consistency, safety and credibility, not the certificate on the wall, with a measurable return on investment over two to two and a half years.

Next Step: Take Our FREE ISO Readiness Snapshot

Wondering how your business measures up against ISO requirements?

Our Integrated Management System (IMS) Snapshot is a free, 10-minute self-assessment covering 14 questions across seven key areas shared by:

- ISO 9001: Quality Management
- ISO 14001: Environmental Management
- ISO 45001: Work Health & Safety Management

The assessment gives you an initial picture of your business's strengths and gaps across all three standards. No ISO knowledge required!

Take the FREE 10-Minute IMS Snapshot

Explore Your Next Steps

Once you've completed the assessment, if you'd like to understand what ISO implementation could look like for your business, let's have a chat.

Book a Free ISO Readiness Chat

You can also explore our **ISO Consulting Services**.

Remember, ISO is not just about certification. It's about building a stronger, safer and more sustainable business.