



“I have huge pride and belief in the work”

says Senior Nadcap Auditor and Trainer Vitorio Stana

Vitorio Stana

Vitorio Stana is a professional engineer and carries out audits for the Nadcap® program all around the world. In the piece below, he describes his role, and what he enjoys about working for the Performance Review Institute.

Vitorio has been a part-time independent auditor for the Nadcap program since 2017, traveling from his base in the Canadian province of British Columbia, to carry out audits throughout Asia, Europe and the U.S. But he has been involved with PRI's quality audits for far longer, as both an industry liaison for the Nadcap program, and a member of the Nadcap Management Council – a select group of senior quality leaders and managers from the program's Subscriber and Supplier organizations.

He has nearly 40 years' experience as a professional engineer, specializing in business systems, processes and material science, and gained his extensive expertise through the dedicated work that he performed for high-profile companies in the sectors of manufacturing, quality, research and testing. In 2010, his significant contributions to aviation safety were formally recognized when he was awarded Transport Canada Aviation Safety Award. In his professional role, Vitorio also provides comprehensive training to personnel in the aviation, space, defense, automotive and marine industries. Likewise, he eagerly imparts his knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the next generation of engineers through his professorship at the University of British Columbia.

In essence, Vitorio lives and breathes product safety, and viewed the prospect of becoming an auditor for Nadcap as another way to further his safety goals. Vitorio says that he jumped at the opportunity to travel to new places, experience new cultures, and understand how people from different backgrounds address similar challenges.

The auditing role

So, what's the auditing role like? “Very rewarding”, says Vitorio. “I have huge pride and belief in the work, seeing companies' processes and systems improving as a result of my auditing efforts.”

He says the job is very complex, calling for significant skill and experience to demonstrate the need for improvement, in a global environment. Detailed technical knowledge is obviously essential, but so too are good leadership and communication skills; while a reasonable amount of emotional intelligence goes a long way towards making the process enjoyable and effective.

"Most companies, even those with significant nonconformities, say they value my audits, which are never perceived as 'dry' or uninspired. Throughout the audit process, I consistently strive to create a meaningful impact and a positive experience. My goal is to encourage the auditee to strive for continual improvement through my audit-specific interactions, and by providing a clear, proactive focus on processes, systems, and people."

Communication and collaboration

Like all our independent auditors, Vitorio manages his own schedule and plans audits to suit the needs of the auditees and his own working style. Communication and collaboration are key to his planning. He explains, "I initiate and communicate an audit plan, but I'm always accommodating and open for feedback. If auditees have concerns, I prioritize addressing these in a timely way."

"It's vital to stay in control. This means taking steps to mitigate any risks that could impede the effective and timely completion of the audit while also concurrently minimizing the potential impact of the audit on day-to-day operations."

On the first day of an audit Vitorio starts with a 'meet and greet', and an opportunity for stakeholders to review and agree upon the daily schedule. After confirming the agenda for the day, he starts working methodically through the plan, performing audits and interacting with the shopfloor, engineering staff and management, as required. Later in the day, he checks that the audit is running on schedule, answers questions, discusses findings, and addresses any concerns that arise. He also asks for feedback about the method and style of communication that he is using, which varies from auditee to auditee, to ensure effective communication throughout the remainder of the audit.

On subsequent days, he begins with a review of the previous day's feedback, addresses outstanding issues or parked items, and then works through the remaining elements of the audit. Each evening he reviews checklists, fine-tunes the plans for the next day to include feedback from the previous day's activities, and checks once again that the audit timeline is staying on track. Throughout the audit process, PRI's in-house team is available to provide support, if needed.

Advice

Vitorio does all he can to make a Nadcap audit as easy as possible for auditees, but he says there are also things auditees can do to help themselves gain the most from the process. One of the key actions he suggests is for auditees to conduct a formal internal pre-audit, and to resolve any identified issues before the PRI auditor arrives. This is valuable even in businesses where managers believe they are on top of their regular inspections because, he says, "Often audits are informal and performed by people with insufficient skill, or incomplete knowledge of the most current standards and requirements". Additionally, the pre-audit can also serve as an opportunity to scope out the Nadcap checklist requirements and clarify any areas of uncertainty.

Vitorio's commitment to good communication and careful planning makes it easier for auditees to do all this. He shares his audit plan at least two months before the audit start date, providing enough detail for the company to develop an in-depth understanding of what will be required of them. He backs up the audit plan with a series of preliminary virtual meetings, so that he can gauge whether there are complicating factors. A language barrier, for example, might require a translator to be present, to ensure there are no misunderstandings. Overall, he says, auditees need a strong plan to be successful.

"Plan thoroughly, prepare well, make sure that all relevant stakeholders have fully engaged and supported the audit preparations, and stay alert." For potential auditors, he similarly advises thorough planning and careful communication. It's also helpful and respectful to create a relationship of understanding and trust with the auditee.

The last key requirement is stamina. "An audit often involves a lot of travel, as well as six or seven hours on your feet each day, plus additional work on documentation in the evenings. But it's so worthwhile – you can be proud that the work you are doing has a huge positive impact on product safety."