



Robert T. Groom
AESF President

President's Corner

Helpful Advice for Finishing Companies: Use the SFMRB Reports To Meet ISO Certification Requirements

Through the Surface Finishing Industry Council (SFIC), the AESF participates with the National Association of Metal Finishers (NAMF) and the Metal Finishing Suppliers Association (MFSA) in the Surface Finishing Market Research Board (SFMRB). The SFMRB surveys the finishing industry once or twice annually to obtain important marketing information of interest to all three associations and their members. Detailed written reports, complete with tables and figures, are available for sale through each association.

In addition to providing insightful information on trends and practices in the industry, which can give your company a competitive edge, the SFMRB reports are valuable not only to the supply side of the metal finishing industry, but to any company that wishes to become ISO 9000 certified.

Let me explain. One of the many requirements of ISO certification is a *Business Plan*. It must be a formal, documented, comprehensive business plan. It must also be a controlled document. This plan may include as applicable: Market-related issues, financial planning and cost, growth projects, plant/facility plans, cost objectives, and projected market share

and sales figures, as well as many other topics.

These goals and plans are required to cover short term (one–two years) and longer term (three years or more), and they are to be based on analysis of competitive products and benchmarking inside and outside the applicable industry segment and the supplier's commodity. An objective process must be used to define the scope and collection of information, including the frequency and method of collection.

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Now, having said that, what is the easiest way to get the benchmarking information you need? Answer: For a very modest price for marketing studies (\$125 for members of the sponsoring organizations; \$250 for non-members), you can purchase a copy of the annual SFMRB reports. At additional cost, you also have

other options available to you through the SFMRB, such as obtaining specialized reports (targeting certain finishes on a regional basis, for example).

At Reilly Plating Company, we have found the SFMRB reports to contain a wealth of information, and the real plus is that we haven't had to take on all the extra work a benchmarking study requires. Buying the reports allowed us to concentrate our efforts in other areas and shortened the time it took for us to become ISO certified. That's why we believe the SFMRB reports are some of the best investments we've ever made. We continue to use them every year to update our marketing plan.

Look for the advertisement in this issue for ordering information on the 1997–98 report, which was released at SUR/FIN® '98 last June. It is an excellent report and contains much more data than any of the previous reports. If you have questions and wish to contact me by e-mail, my address is Groom@reillyplating.com (FAX number is 313/386-2270).