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>
> says Independent Auditor Ketan Nitsure

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TPG Auditor

Ketan Nitsure has worked with PRI as a part-time independent auditor since May 2021, fitting audits around running the investment casting business he shares with his wife. With an advanced diploma in foundry technology and 31 years' experience in the foundry sector he was an ideal candidate to become an auditor of castings businesses, supporting companies across India to gain accreditation and find new business opportunities.

Why become an auditor?

With a well-established, efficient management team running day-to-day business in his own company, Ketan was looking for a new challenge and audit work seemed a good choice. He says, "While working in foundries I have been an auditee many times and jumping the fence to the other side felt like an interesting progression. Playing a part in making the safety-critical aviation, transport and power generation sectors even safer, through PRI's enhanced and thorough quality checks, was the icing on the cake."

Ketan says being an auditor is everything he hoped it would be. He works mainly in India, but has also fitted in some overseas travel to Dubai and Europe that has broadened his horizons. "At home and overseas I am meeting business leaders and technical professionals, which is enhancing my understanding of my own field. As an auditor I can observe innovations and get to understand in detail various state-of-the-art processes that I might otherwise not get to see."

Typical day

Ketan typically begins the first day of an audit at 9am, starting with a meeting with the quality manager, other involved department heads and potentially the CEO. This is an opportunity to outline the audit plan and set the tone for the next few days which, Ketan says, should be "friendly, ethical and strict but never adversarial".

Then, it's a plant tour, during which he can observe operations to answer many of the checklist questions and identify the jobs that must be audited. He raises any potential non-conformance reports (NCRs) as he spots them and makes a note so they can be discussed later in more detail. Much of the rest of the day is spent with document reviews and visits to the shopfloor before ending with a de-brief. He makes a point of complimenting things that are being done well.

Subsequent days follow a similar pattern and then, once the audit is complete, he may fit in some sightseeing if he's somewhere new and he has factored some time into the schedule he has set himself. Every audit is different and Ketan says this is part of the job's appeal. "There was one instance in a mid-European country when I had to conduct part of an audit at midnight due to an electrical power issue. It was freezing, but great fun being on the shopfloor at night!"

Advice

Ketan recognizes that an audit is a big thing for a company and says there are ways to make it both easier and more effective. In essence, he advocates taking time to prepare. "Customers expect and deserve the best quality so don't take anything lightly," he says. "Go through the checklists carefully and answer every question thoroughly. Do not hesitate to ask PRI staff if you have any queries – they are more than willing to help."

"Keep all relevant documents ready for the auditor to verify. Stick to the letter and, more importantly, the spirit of the questions in the checklist. Auditors are never on a fault-finding mission. They are there to ensure that companies are continuing their excellent work, and that they have ironed out any creases that may have been seen in earlier audits."

Most importantly, he says, companies should conduct their own internal pre-audit thoroughly, well in advance of the actual PRI audit so there is time to address any issues. Companies that do so, he says, can see real benefits with the number of previously recorded NCRs reducing significantly – occasionally to zero – on subsequent audits.

Ketan has advice too, for anyone considering becoming an auditor for PRI. He says, "Always prepare for each audit thoroughly, as if it is your first. Be confident, but never over-confident. Keep yourself up-to-date with the latest trends and research in your field of expertise and have an open mind – never bring your own pre-conceived notions or prejudices into an audit. You will be pleasantly surprised with the innovations that people bring into conventional processes to make them better or more efficient."

Working with PRI

As an independent contractor Ketan is responsible for making his own arrangements for travel and accommodation, but PRI staff do their best to make sure they are well-supported, says Ketan:

"As far as travel, accommodation and meals go, PRI ensures that we are as comfortable as is reasonably possible, so we are fresh for the main task – auditing. Expense claims, if submitted properly, are settled quickly. PRI staff are always ready to help; I find them friendly, prompt, ethical and well-informed."

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