



An Irish SME's perspective on standards development

“Inputting into Irish and European harmonised standards as an industry expert helps us be part of the process of preparing for change, and that’s really valuable.”

CAROLINE ASHE BRADY, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, KORE SYSTEMS



NSAI

Shaping and implementing international standards

An interview with Caroline Ashe Brady, Commercial Director of Kore Systems

Not only has Kore Insulation wholeheartedly embraced working to international standards, it is also actively involved in shaping new energy efficiency standards.

As a member of the National Insulation Association of Ireland (NIAI), Kore Systems has contributed to the development of the original Code of Practice for housing retrofit, known as S.R. 54:2014/A2:2022. The company is continuing to input into the project to revise this Code of Practice, which is technically known as a standard recommendation.



This new code of practice will be vital for Ireland to meet its targets under the National Retrofit Plan, as part of the broader Climate Action Plan. It'll provide technical guidance on the design and installation of retrofit measures for designers and contractors who are making over the existing housing stock to be more energy-efficient.

“Retrofit is a new industry,” explains Caroline Ashe Brady, Commercial Director of Kore, which holds multiple certifications to ISO standards through NSAI. “This comprehensive document sets out its rules of engagement and levels the playing field, meaning each homeowner will get the same standard of work as the next one.”

The value of contributing to standards

Cavan-based Kore has also contributed to the development of some European construction standards, using NSAI's public platform Your Standards, Your Say. *“Inputting into Irish and European harmonised standards as an industry expert helps us be part of the process of preparing for change, and that’s really valuable,” says Caroline.*

"These consultations offer a streamlined way to get ideas from industry and also enable technical collaboration with competitors to improve standards. I'd certainly say any relevant companies not involved in this process should look to get involved."

Benchmarking to international standards

Kore's business comprises a manufacturing arm and a retrofit company. Through NSAI, both hold I.S. EN ISO 9001 Quality Management, I.S. EN ISO 14001 Environmental Management and I.S. ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management certification, while Airpacks is also certified to I.S. EN ISO 50001 Energy Management.

When Caroline and her husband Noel took over the business through succession planning in 2009, they were keen to position it as the industry leader. They looked to benchmark the business to international standards to ensure it could carry out its growth strategy, including by being positioned to fulfil government contracts.

"It was a real step change for us," remembers Caroline. "When you're growing a business, there are three levers – people, processes and technology – and you need to move and tweak them all the time to make progress. We saw that certification to ISO standards could help us identify what we were getting right and what we needed to change."

Furthermore, the Kore team found it was able to take a more integrated approach as many of the core central support services across both its businesses can be standardised. *"If we make a change to our HR process, for example, that applies to both companies,"* says Caroline.

Shaping a positive workplace culture through standards

When Caroline and the team first engaged with I.S. EN ISO 9001 certification, their manufacturing business had 20 separate processes and 18 people. Now it has at least 50 processes and more than 80 employees. The greatest benefit of its certification journey is not necessarily the most immediately obvious, however.

When a business works to put excellent processes in place, explains Caroline, it can radically improve the workplace culture. When things go wrong, for example, the team looks at how it can improve the process, rather than blaming a colleague or customer.

"Having great processes takes the personal out of it and makes things less emotive," says Caroline. *"It really supports the concept of psychological safety in an organisation. People feel safe to say what they need to say, and it changes the conversation to get to the root of issues, which could be a skills gap, a technology gap, a communications gap or another issue with a process."*

Giving customers the best possible experience

The ultimate outcome of superb standards and processes, says Caroline, is improved customer experience. *"If our process goes wrong for our customer or the product is wrong, they'll feel frustrated and let down. A really good standard produces a happy customer who thinks it's great to do business with Kore."*

"We want to make sure the right product made to the right spec is on the right site at the right time. Each member of our team has a part to play in delivering on that promise, and our processes enable it to happen."

Kore-system.com

+ If you'd like to contribute to the development of standards for your industry, register your interest using NSAI's public platform. You can comment on draft standards through 'Your Standards, Your Say' at nsai.ie/standards/your-standards-your-say



NSAI