

## Boosting client trust on information security

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-SEAN BYRNE, GRANITE/CERTIFICATION CLIENT



# NSAI



## Supporting international business growth with standards

*An interview with Sean Byrne of GRANITE*

For a fast-growing digital agency like GRANITE, certification to ISO standards is crucial to client trust and confidence. As the company extends its reach in overseas markets, being certified to I.S. EN ISO/IEC 27001 for its information security management system means it can show independent, third-party evidence of best practice to international standards.

*“ISO standards are created by thousands of experts over time,”* says Sean Byrne, Head of Compliance at GRANITE. *“By working to a standard, you’re getting instructions from the best thinkers on how to do it.”*

Achieving I.S. EN ISO/IEC 27001 certification has also opened doors for GRANITE, a full-service global agency based in Dublin and employing more than 180 across several offices.

This certification is increasingly a prerequisite in public sector and enterprise tenders, for example. Likewise, it immediately smooths the way for potential clients in highly regulated sectors or those subject to formal supplier due diligence processes. *“Achieving certification is not just good practice,”* says Sean. *“It’s a business requirement.”*

### **A career supported by standards**

Over decades working across engineering and IT, Sean has truly seen the value of standards and certification. As a young engineer making industrial diamonds in GE’s Coolock plant in the 1980s, he ended up working for nine months on I.S. EN ISO 9001 certification for quality management systems. *“I got to understand all aspects of the business,”* he recalls, *“and had a very positive experience of standards.”*

In 1996, he set up Enhance, a digital agency. *“There were only 60 .ie domain names then, but we quickly realised the importance of accessibility standards and worked to the W3C standards. Those guard rails and structures meant we did well in search engines such as Google, which was new then.”*

GRANITE and Enhance merged in 2015, with Sean bringing his strong track record in policy and procedure development and implementation to GRANITE. *“It was unusual for a web agency to be documenting everything and working to the level of standards, but we were already managing remote teams, so it was critical.”*

Having put significant structures in place around GDPR, Sean and his colleagues saw working towards I.S. EN ISO/IEC 27001 certification as a natural next step. They engaged an external consultancy to support their preparation and spent a year reviewing and adapting GRANITE’s policies and procedures.

### **Working with NSAI**

Sean was keen to partner again with NSAI, pointing to its strong reputation, local presence and understanding of Irish organisations. *“NSAI has the balance right between accessibility and prestige,”* he says. *“The journey from initial engagement through to certification was well structured and transparent. The clearly outlined requirements allowed us to plan effectively and integrate ISO/IEC 27001 into our existing processes.”*

GRANITE also found the audit process

invaluable. *“It was incredibly thorough, but it was also constructive,”* he says. *“With NSAI, the focus of audits was on adding value and identifying opportunities for improvement rather than simply assessing compliance.”*

As NSAI is a member of IQNET, an international certification network, GRANITE will also benefit from IQNET-recognised certification.

### **Credibility built on continuous improvement**

As client expectations around data security increase, I.S. EN ISO/IEC 27001 provides a framework that ensures GRANITE’s approach evolves alongside those expectations, Sean explains.

*“It is not simply a point-in-time certification, but a commitment to continuous improvement. The real value comes from embedding structured processes into our day-to-day operations. That ongoing discipline is key to maintaining our credibility as we scale across new markets and client segments.”*

Sean and his colleagues are now progressing towards I.S. EN ISO/IEC 42001 certification, extending their structured approach into the governance of AI and emerging technologies. *“This is a new standard and very few companies in Ireland have it yet, but because we already have ISO/IEC 27001 certification through NSAI, we’re now talking with them about ISO/IEC 42001 certification for AI Management Systems. However, we’re not starting at the bottom of the hill. We’re halfway up already.”*

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### **+ IQNET: Promoting certification internationally**

The IQNET Association is an international network of conformity assessment bodies. NSAI’s membership of IQNET can help promote your certification on an international stage, as organisations certified by NSAI for ISO/IEC 27001 can also receive an IQNET certificate. Next step: To start your certification journey with NSAI, visit [NSAI.ie/27001](https://NSAI.ie/27001)



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