

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR INTERVIEW



INTRODUCING

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ABOUT

NADCAP AUDITOR SINCE **2002**

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT IN **NDT, NMSE, M&I, AQS and CP (etching)**

BASED IN **UK**

FAVOURITE PLACE TO VISIT **I COULDN'T SAY...**

“ **Being a Nadcap auditor has really opened my eyes** ”

[What attracted you to Nadcap auditing in the first place?](#)

I had been working in the industry since I left school in 1977. I was approaching my 40th birthday and just felt that, if I didn't branch out and do something different, I would be at the same company until I was ready to retire. I wanted to try something different.

And it was definitely the right move. I have learned more about my job in the last ten years than I did in the first twenty. Being a Nadcap auditor has really opened my eyes. I feel like I've seen every different way there is to do a job – although I keep learning new things all the time!

[What has surprised you about being a Nadcap auditor?](#)

There have been many pleasant surprises; for example, I have seen some very innovative ways of achieving results. Another surprise, I suppose, is that there is a psychological element to the audit. Some suppliers seem frightened to complain or disagree with an auditor or Staff Engineer. As a Nadcap auditor for over ten years now, I can reassure anyone reading this that the auditors and Staff Engineers certainly don't think they're perfect and are open to hearing different perspectives. So anyone who wants to query a decision or NCR should really feel able to do that. There's no comeback or bad feeling and NCR's are sometimes voided.

[What's the best thing about being a Nadcap auditor?](#)
[What about the worst?](#)

Well, from my perspective, the best is that, because audits are planned in advance, I can see the work I have through to the end of the year which means I can plan my time, finances etc effectively.

On the other side, there can be a lot of travel involved. Some people love that but I am really a homebody and the job can be quite lonely, most of my audits are around Europe and the Mediterranean, although when needed, I have gone and audited further afield.

What would be the key piece of advice you'd give to companies preparing for a Nadcap audit?

Whoever is responsible for Nadcap at your company needs to spend an equal amount of hours preparing for the audit as the auditor will spend conducting the audit. So, if it's a two-day audit, you need to spend at least 16 hours getting ready. That means 16 hours focusing on the audit – no emails, no phone calls. That's what the Nadcap auditor does. If you take less time than the auditor, then it only stands to reason that the auditor will observe more than you do and potentially find more issues than you did.

Still using the auditor as a model, you should go through the checklist and answer every question thoroughly. It is not enough to say "yes" to a question – you must be able to support that with evidence. For every checklist question, I'd suggest adding a column for procedure, page number and paragraph reference so that the evidence is easy for you to find during the audit itself – plus it forms a key part of your preparation. Ultimately, Nadcap audit success centers on being well organized.

In your experience, describe the impact of Nadcap on the companies you have audited?

Oh I have definitely seen an impact. Nadcap has raised the profile of special processes in the aerospace industry. Anything that has to be paid for gets attention so even the accountants are aware of special process quality now. Within NDT, Nadcap has also raised the status of inspectors from the dark corners of the factory to NDT technicians. Also, Nadcap has helped internal quality and communications because the different departments have to meet to discuss documentation, issues etc.

Please describe a typical audit day.

If the facility is more than 50 miles from my home, I travel the day before and arrive around in the hotel 10pm, then after a nights sleep, I am up and ready for the day ahead, this also applies to audits abroad where I will travel to the supplier recommended hotel the day or evening before the audit and if possible return in the evening after the audit closing meeting otherwise I will travel home the day after the audit.

I typically get to the site at 8.30am and the first thing is to hold the opening meeting. In a small company, it

may be less formal with just the Quality Manager and myself there; in a larger company, there may be around 20 people scheduled to attend and we start promptly at 9am. Following the opening meeting, I take a quick site tour and ask to be based near the area where processing takes place.

I start the audit by conducting the job audits. I feel that, if I'm in an office going through the documentation with the Quality Manager first thing, it blinds me somewhat to the actual processing of hardware so I prefer to observe that for myself first and then review the documentation later (or during, in the case of job cards etc).

It is my practice to say during the opening meeting that, if I note an NCR, I will say so at the time. However, I reiterate all NCR's I found at the end-of-day meeting as well. During the end-of-day meeting, I offer to provide a written synopsis of my findings from that day first thing in the morning and I provide my completed report at the closing meeting on the last day.

If I don't see any non-conformances, sometimes the supplier will ask me "how's the audit going?" because I haven't really given them much indication. My standard response is "I haven't observed any issues but I need to check the documentation tonight to be convinced of compliance and I will confirm how we're doing to you in the morning." That allows me time to check and be sure of my conclusions.

Generally, suppliers don't argue with me over the non-conformances I identify but if there is any doubt or conflict, we can call the Staff Engineer together.

I want the supplier to be happy with how the audit goes and part of that is in good communication and making sure that they get value from the experience. If it's a two-day audit, I try make sure that the supplier gets sixteen hours of auditing time: it's what they've paid for, after all. That said, it can depend on the amount of audit preparation that was done. Suppliers that are well organised and know where the documents are and so on can help the audit progress smoothly; suppliers who need to look for the answers to every question make the audit go slower than it should but that doesn't happen much.

As I said before, being organised is key to audit preparation and success during the audit. That would be my main advice.