Questions and Answers from "Training Auditors for a Virtual World"
Presented by TIA and The DESARA Group, May 7, 2020

1. **Can sensory evaluation possible in remote audits?**
   a. Potentially. If you have a technical expert, that is, an unbiased individual with expertise in the subject at hand, who could perform the sensory evaluation on site and report to the auditor, you may be able to achieve the audit objectives. You would include the technical expert in the audit report and explain the methods used and any limitations.

      Also, technology continues to evolve. Here is an article as an example:
      "Smell cameras' built to detect explosives could sniff out coronavirus"
      California-based Koniku partnered with Airbus on the project as the start-up specializes in neurotechnology. Read in Daily
      Mail: https://apple.news/AFhBErKLYQSOfWIhqO-i9vA

2. **Few audits definitely need to be onsite.. Ex. Lab audits.. are there any checklist where we can do a portion remote and reqd onsite?**
   a. ISO 19011 does not include a checklist, but there is information on remote auditing in the appendix. Here is a quote that may be helpful in creating a risk/feasibility assessment for processes you are considering:

      "The feasibility of remote audit activities can depend on several factors (e.g. the level of risk to achieving the audit objectives, the level of confidence between auditor and auditee's personnel and regulatory requirements).

      "At the level of the audit programme, it should be ensured that the use of remote and on-site application of audit methods is suitable and balanced, in order to ensure satisfactory achievement of audit programme objectives."
      (ISO 19011:2018 Appendix A1)

      See also IAF FAQ at https://iaffaq.com/faqs/ , in particular Q#25

3. **Are there samples of an Organizational Readiness Assessment?**
   a. Check out 32:20 in the replay (https://tiaonline.org/what-we-do/events/webinars/) for a sample. In our Virtual Instructor Led Training courses, we go through the development and customization of an Organizational Readiness Assessment specific to your organization.

4. **What do you mean by Risk Assessment? Is it for Auditor or Auditee?**
   a. It is recommended that the auditor perform a risk assessment regarding the capability of the audit, given the specific methods you intend to use, to fulfill the audit objectives. That risk assessment will include questions about whether the audited organization is prepared to be audited remotely in a way that will allow you to meet objectives. The audited organization, working with the auditor as needed, should close any gaps and identify risk mitigations, e.g. a back-up screen sharing platform in case your planned method has a problem during the audit.

5. **How to handle the confidentiality?**
   a. Each organization must assess its risks related to sharing information using ICT for each audit. A number of factors related to confidentiality are covered in the recording at https://tiaonline.org/what-we-do/events/webinars/

6. **Just wondering also, can this virtual audit method conducted for like Corporate Social Responsibility Audit? (Such as RBA, SA8000, SMETA, etc.)**

   a. The use of ICT and remote audits may be affected by scheme requirements, so please check with the scheme for their requirements. For example, Social Accountability International (SAI) has released Issue 6: SAAS Instruction 2020-6: April.2020: Coronavirus Temporary Instruction for the SA8000 Program which includes:

      "SAAS presently believes that (following a careful risk assessment) 'remote audit' activitiesshould be viable for 'routine surveillance' and/or 'recertification' of clients that are well-known to the CB. SAAS will continue to consider the viability of CBs performing remote auditing for other activities within the audit cycle, however this is unlikely in the near future and is not an SAI or SAAS priority in the current situation."

7. **Let's say our customer audited us and we need to walk through the manufacture process and we know that's pretty confidential and we couldnt control everyone screenshot or take a video of our manufacture process. Customer restricted envt - do we have any best practice to do remote audits.. where screen sharing is also a challenge because of VPNs and Customer envt.**
   a. Each organization must assess its risks related to sharing information using ICT for each audit. A number of factors related to confidentiality are covered in the recording at https://tiaonline.org/what-we-do/events/webinars/
   Again, the audit objectives must be met; if they cannot, then remote auditing may not be a feasible option.

8. **What metrics do you suggest for process monitoring virtual audits?**
    a. Possible metrics, depending on their importance to your organization, could include:
       Auditor survey of effectiveness
       Auditee survey of effectiveness
       Timeliness of completion / rescheduling
       Number of completed audits vs. incomplete due to limitations of remote methods
       Procedures and tools update (yes/no or %complete)
       Savings in travel time and costs versus any extra time or technology required

       Note that monitoring may be more qualitative than quantitative, that is, look at the actual feedback from auditors and auditees more than numerical ratings to see if audits continue to be effective using remote methods.

9. **Remote auditing in a Production environment can be tough (noise, poor wi-fi connection, etc.) Any suggestions? (Related question: What approach would you use to review manufacturing processes and verify they are up to date/being followed?)**
    a. We suggest having an audit guide operate the camera or other device for auditees on a production floor. If the auditee can be on a noise cancelling headset with the auditor, s/he can respond to the auditor's requests to capture certain view. The interviewee may need to go into a quieter environment to replay the video and/or to answer further questions. Documents can be securely sent or viewed via screen sharing. Alternately, you can interview people in an office where they say, "I'll take you out and show you that when we're done." Then, even if they can't be heard they can use visual cues or possibly speak directly into a uni-directional microphone with a headset to handle further questions.
       Get creative, and experiment with what works in your environment.

10. How do we calculate man days for remote audits?

    a. Requirements for the minimum number of audit days are in the IAF document MD-5. IAF Document MD-4 suggests that additional time <u>may</u> be needed for remote audits, especially due to planning. CBs are no longer limited to the "30% rule" limiting remote auditing. Work with your CB to determine whether additional time may be required for remote auditing, which would naturally be offset by the reduction in travel costs. A audit-day is 8 hours, whether continuous or not.
For internal and customer/supplier audits, use good judgment based on risk assessments.

11. I am finding that clients are the host for the virtual meeting they choose. How can that be recorded for the auditors?

    a. The auditee can share their recordings or the auditor can have screen recording on the computer they are viewing on, as two possibilities. Arrangements and permissions for recording and sharing information related to the audit are important aspects of the planning and risk assessment for the audits. You may decide not to record and/or share, especially if there are concerns on one side or the other. Traditionally, notes and exhibits are sufficient evidence of an audit; recordings are not traditionally used.

12. Without site visits virtual audits are valid (food audits)

    a. The food safety industry is taking actions to address maintaining the integrity of food safety certifications during this pandemic. Please see:
https://www.iaf.nu/articles/IAF_WG_Food_TF_GFSI_Publishes_New_Document/645
for more information.

13. **Explain difference between virtual site...**
    Related question: Does the site/location matters in remote-virtual world auditing...
    a. Consider the example of a software development team or a corporate procurement team that works at multiple locations around the world, 24 hours a day, using common processes, tools, information repositories, and objectives.

       For calculating CB audit days per MD-5, everyone who works in the virtual process would be counted as employees of a "virtual site" regardless of the physical location where they work, and they would not be double-counted. The advantage of remote auditing is that representatives from multiple locations who participate in the process can be audited as a single group, as opposed to talking to them in series as you visit different sites (or homes!) where their desks are.
       The important distinction is that a "virtual site" has its own definition, and remote auditing can be used for auditing virtual sites, physical sites, and processes that occur with some workers who are not co-located either permanently or temporarily.

       From IAF Document MD-4:
       "Virtual Site - Virtual location where a client organization performs work or provides a service using an on-line environment allowing persons irrespective of physical locations to execute processes.

       "Note 1: A virtual site cannot be considered where the processes must be executed in a physical environment, e.g., warehousing, manufacturing, physical testing laboratories, installation or repairs to physical products.

       "Note 2: A virtual site (e.g. company intranet) is considered a single site for the calculation of audit time.

14. **In your experience is it better to schedule short meetings in several days (2-3) or longer meetings and finish in one day?**
    a. In my experience it depends on the stamina and leadership ability of the audit team as well as the culture of the audited organization. I have done it both ways, with the general principle of allowing periodic breaks to avoid screen fatigue when meetings are back-to-back.

15. **How can we prevent auditor from taking screenshots during the remote audit? What if an audit trail takes you into an area that is unfamiliar with remote audits?**
    a. During the planning phase (and contracting, for CB), requirements, restrictions, and obligations as well as an orientation for those not familiar with remote methods should take place.

16. **Is this the future of (external) audits? Leveraging VR etc.**
    a. Time will tell! Auditors and audited organizations would be well advised to become familiar with remote audit methods and to evaluate the risks and opportunities associated with the practice, including keeping up with technological advances and business needs.