



Global-Z International Enhances Global Brand With ISO/IEC 27001:2013 Information Security Certification



Customer Needs

- Assure clients that they can trust Global-Z with their most confidential customer information.
- Implement a formalized, standard, continuous-improvement approach to information security using standard operating procedures and processes
- Adopt industry best practices and work with an experienced, trusted registrar to obtain ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certification
- Expand the global reach of the company's market and client base
- Grow the company's capabilities and develop employee skills
- Shorten the sales cycle

Customer Benefits

- Reduce information security risks with proactive measures, rather than waiting to take corrective action to remediate issues
- Become known as a trustworthy supplier and partner who demonstrates leadership and differentiates themselves from competitors with comprehensive information security credentials and robust business solutions
- Position and prepare the company for growth
- Demonstrate that the company is highly qualified to pursue business with the world's premier organizations
- Implement an established, validated, and continually improving robust information security framework that reduces potential for data breaches

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Dimitri Garder
CEO Global-Z
International Inc.

About Global-Z

Global-Z International Inc. is known by clients around the world as the expert in international customer data. The company handles highly confidential and sensitive information for its clients, including their detailed databases of customer names, addresses, emails, phone numbers and pertinent metadata. Global-Z gathers, cleans, analyzes and prioritizes all of the above and integrates data silos from multiple sources to provide clients a single, integrated 360° view of their global customer information.

Founded in 1989, the Bennington, VT-based company initially focused its efforts on providing accurate customer data to direct marketing companies. Over time, its customers grew and new opportunities arose. Today, Global-Z is a pioneer in the development of global customer Master Data Management (MDM) solutions.

The small-but-growing company has a client list that includes some of the largest and most successful global brands in the retail, consumer electronics, marketing services and publishing industries. With its ISO/IEC 27001:2013 Information Security certification, Global-Z is poised to grow its team of experts and focus on clients that are looking for comprehensive, customized and secure MDM solutions that will help them provide the best possible experience to their own customers.

“We are one of the only customer MDM companies to be ISO/IEC 27001:2013-compliant, GDPR-compliant and to have implemented the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield and Swiss-U.S. Privacy Shield frameworks,” said Dimitri Garder, CEO of Global-Z. “We take information security very seriously because a single data breach in our business would put our clients and our business at serious risk.”

Global-Z's facilities in Vermont and its failover location in New York are ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certified. The company also works with partners sites in North America, Europe and Asia.

One of the ways that Global-Z differentiates itself is that the staff of data experts cultivated and embraced a unique understanding of the technology, the many languages, data regulations, cultural norms and mores. They use their expertise to serve their global customers and maintain the company's data management platform and software algorithms.

Global-Z's proprietary technology, which covers 99% of the world's population customer contact data, and its staff's experience and expertise enable the company's clients to accurately identify their best customers, drive their business analytics and improve personal customer experiences.

“Many of the systems that our clients' customers touch do not 'talk' to each other,” said Garder. “Our data management platform integrates, standardizes, identifies, links and analyzes that data to give them a clear, real-time understanding of each of their customers.”

Global-Z's customers access these services via two standard Web Services APIs: (1) A plug-and-play API, which can be implemented in a couple of hours, is typically used for cleaning customer data. (2) The MDM services API, also standard, is more complex, comprehensive and integrated into the client's data flows.

Global-Z works alongside its customers to complete the data integration, testing and live launch stages that go into creating MDM services, explained Garder.

In addition to providing a single point of access to customer data quality, Global-Z is committed to providing its global customers with secure, reliable and confidential handling of that data. While Global-Z does not handle credit card information, the protection of personal data is just as critical to its customers. In fact, the security of personal data is

highly prized, and often protected through regulatory frameworks, in many countries outside the U.S.

Global-Z is dedicated to maintaining a top-notch customer satisfaction rating with its clients. The company maintains a very high Net Promoter Score of 74, and over 90% of its new revenues come from existing customer referrals, said Garder.

Decision to Certify

The desire to meet the increasingly demanding security needs of its existing customers and streamline its sales cycle with potential customers drove Global-Z to seek ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certification three years ago.

“As data breaches continued to increase across the industry and new privacy regulations were being enacted, more and more of our customers were becoming increasingly conscious of data security practices during the pre-sale process,” said Garder. “We found that created a barrier to the marketplace and to the trust that was required to move projects forward.”

Specifically, Global-Z's clients and potential customers wanted to know what information security protection framework the company was using. This, in turn, indicated that such a framework was quickly becoming an expectation, he added.

Up to that point, Global-Z had successfully relied on informal, decentralized information security practices that evolved during three decades in business. Garder started looking at the available standards. Global-Z decided to pursue ISO/IEC 27001:2013 because it was the most globally recognized and trusted framework, he noted.

“As a global supplier, we needed a compliance framework that was recognized around the world; ISO/IEC 27001 had that recognition,” said Garder.

New regulations played a role in that choice, too. Regulators behind the EU’s GDPR regulation identified ISO/IEC 27001:2013 as the gold standard for evaluating data suppliers in the marketplace, he added.

Global-Z also appreciated the flexibility of the standard, including the ability to select and implement various controls based on risk. This is because each company using the standard is likely to have different issues to address. For example, Global-Z enjoys very low employee turnover, so the standard allows the company to put more emphasis on other issues of concern, said Garder.

Journey to Certification

Garder personally owned the decision to pursue certification from the very beginning and he hired a CIO to work with him when the project started.

“ISO/IEC 27001 certification was explicitly communicated to the Global-Z team as our top priority for three years,” said Garder.

Global-Z already had a strong culture concerning the importance of privacy and security, and a list of happy clients to prove it. However, changing the company’s approach from taking corrective actions to preventing incidents in the first place was one of the biggest challenges the company had to overcome in the early stages of the certification process.

To encourage the necessary cultural shift within Global-Z, Garder secured a Vermont Training Program grant in partnership with the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center. He used the grant, which matched Global-Z’s contribution dollar-for-dollar, to hire a consultant to train his entire team. The team learned about the standard and best practices for information security

management systems, he said. Specifically, this included the advantages of embracing the formal, resilient practices made possible by ISO/IEC 27001’s modern management system implemented from the ground up.

“After the training, I continued to evangelize the team about letting ISO/IEC 27001:2013’s continual improvement process do the work. Best practice is to get the framework in place, build management systems and measure them to make improvements over time,” said Garder. “It’s really just been getting people to think differently about pay now or pay later.”

Constant communication played a significant role during the entire certification process. Garder and his team met daily to discuss the process and its milestones face-to-face. He also wrote a weekly blog that described the ongoing work flow, what was being done and why. The abundance of communication helped people see how their particular jobs fit in to the process and better understand why the company was allocating such a significant amount of resources to the project, he added.

“It’s one thing to understand the need for change and be willing to do what is required. However, it is quite another

thing to actually do it. That requires skill,” he added. “As we jumped in to the certification process we had some misfires and people realized that the change was more significant and harder to do than we thought. But, you get better at change the more you practice it.”

Communication at Global-Z went both ways. The company’s culture of honesty and open communication freed Garder’s staff to let him know if there were things they did not understand or wanted to discuss further, he noted.

“The best ideas come from functioning teams, so we have put a lot of effort into team development and creating a culture in which people can bring their ideas and concerns to the table,” he added. “I think we had a better outcome to the certification process as a result.”

Reaping the Rewards

ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certification significantly changed the way that Global-Z serves its customers.



"It was a quantum leap forward for our organization," Garder explained. "We have embraced concepts and strategies such as Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) and continual improvement as a lifestyle. We are integrating them into everything we do on a day-to-day basis until they become as automatic as muscle memory. Of course, these will evolve over time as we learn more."

Overall, its implementation of ISO/IEC 27001:2013 helped Global-Z to reduce the risk of data breaches and formalize the company's operations, said Garder. As a result, his team is enjoying more stability in their work processes and the company is providing customers with ever improving resilience and service levels.

For example, Global-Z deployed a completely new infrastructure implementation in one of its failover data centers in record time.

"We had aging technology that wasn't keeping up with customer demands and we replaced it all with newer technology in this colocation redevelopment project," said Garder. "In the past, that would have been accomplished using informal, decentralized

processes that would have taken significantly more time and resources."

With a couple of years of experience implementing its ISO/IEC 27001:2013 framework, the project was very streamlined. People put more emphasis on planning than on doing.

"When we were ready to go live, we turned up this fairly significant implementation over a single weekend," said Garder. "That would have taken months or even longer, before."

The project was a moral victory, he noted. It helped everyone on the Global-Z team see and understand the benefits of using the ISO/IEC 27001:2013 framework.

"As we see such extraordinary benefits and advantages, we begin to embrace change. So, this project was important for building trust in the new process," said Garder.

ROI

Global-Z's expects that ISO/IEC 27001:2013 will improve the company's reach in the markets where it wants to pursue new clients. The certification further differentiates Global-Z from its competitors. This, in turn, will reduce the company's sales cycle because even the largest players will know that Global-Z is a premium global brand, explained Garder.

Why BSI?

Global-Z interviewed several registrars before making the decision to obtain its ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certification with BSI. Ultimately, just like the ISO brand itself, BSI's high-quality brand, which is well-known, respected and trusted globally, met Global-Z's needs the best.

"The trust and relationship were there from the beginning and the folks who delivered the proposal were clear and concise," said Garder.

The proposal spoke to Global-Z's pain points as a small company by emphasizing that BSI would be a valued part of the certification processes from start to finish, he added. BSI also offered more agility and experience with standards and their maturation process than other registrars.

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Your business could benefit from ISO/IEC 27001:2013 just like Global-Z.
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