

Product Category Selection
And
Validation Guidelines

Forward

Assuring that TL 9000 measurements data are as accurate as possible requires that organizations certified to TL 9000 select the correct product category. Reporting data using an incorrect product category may impact the value of the performance data reports. These guidelines are to assist organizations in selecting the correct product category and assisting TL 9000 auditors in validation of the product category choice.

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Purpose of These Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to help TL 9000 registered organizations, certification body (CB) auditors, and accreditation bodies (AB) assure that TL 9000 data is reported in the correct product category. Product category selection is a responsibility of the TL 9000 registered organization, with verification of the correct choice by the CB auditor.

Responsible Parties for Proper TL 9000 Product Category Selection

- Organization – Responsible for product category selection
- Certification Body (CB) – Responsible for validating the organization’s product category selection
- Accreditation Body (AB) – Responsible for verifying that the CB is effective in validation of organization’s choice of product category

Quick Start for Proper TL 9000 Product Category Selection

One of the first things an organization can do is to determine the scope of their registration, that is, define which parts of the organization will become certified. The organization provides product to customers and these products must be assigned to the correct product category as part of the registration. QuEST Forum has defined some 130+ product categories in a rigorous way as shown in the ‘Rules for Classification of Products’ in the Appendix of this paper.

Organizations can quickly make a first assignment of their products to product categories by reviewing the example products for each product category shown in Table A-1 of the product category tables. The product category tables, while part of the TL 9000 standard, are available free to the public through a link on <http://tl9000.org/links.html>. Next the organization refines and/or verifies the assignment through the following selection and verification steps.

Selection:

1. Consider the “[scope](#)” of the TL 9000 registration. The scope statement is something that is agreed to early in the process of certification by the organization and certification body. It describes the depth and breadth of the TL 9000 registered quality management system (QMS) and defines the products or services offered under that QMS. Customer requirements that would impact the scope or product category selection must be checked.
2. Understand the [primary function](#) of the product(s) or service(s) offered to customers. Depending on the breadth of the product line or service offerings the organization may need to report data in multiple product categories.
3. Compare the [primary function](#) of the product against the product category definitions in Table A-1 of the product category tables reference at <http://tl9000.org/links.html>.
4. Select the product category(s) that best fits [the primary function](#) of the product or service delivered, while still meeting the rules for classification of products.

Verification:

1. Compare the data reporting requirements for each measurement relative to the business and to data availability; this will provide additional insight into proper selection. It should be that all or most of the data requirements can be fulfilled by the organization's existing processes. There may be a requirement to add processes to collect required measurements.
2. Based on the required measurements (Table A-2) to be submitted for the selected product category, determine if the selected product category seems to be a reasonable fit for the organization.
3. Review the [names of companies](#), and products, which report data into the selected product category to understand what other companies report and review any product similarities to help guide the product category selection.
4. Review the selected product categories with the organization's executive management to get their concurrence.
5. Before creating a TL 9000 registration on the TL 9000 Registration Management System, review the product category selection with the chosen [certification body \(registrar\)](#) to get their concurrence on the product category selection.

Why Are Product Categories Important?

Table A-1 of the product category tables found at <http://tl9000.org/links.html> defines the product categories identified by QuEST Forum. The product categories allow for direct comparison of TL 9000 measurement data reported in the product categories.

There are over 1800 sites certified to TL 9000 and TL 9000 measurement data appropriate for the product categories certified at each site is submitted monthly to a secure measurements repository. TL 9000 measurements include:

- Problem Reports (NPR)
- Fix Response Time (FRT)
- Overdue Fix Responsiveness (OFR)
- Outage (SO, SONE, SSO)
- On Time Delivery (OTD)
- Field Returns (FR)
- Software (SFQ, SPR)
- Service Quality (SQ)

Not all these measurements are reported in all product categories. The registration option selected (H, S, V) and the product category determine which measurements are reported. Table A-2 identifies the measurements that can be reported by product category and the registration option determines which of those measurements must be reported. For convenience, data submission templates are available that define the measurements to be reported. The templates are publicly available through a link to Standardized Data Submission Templates on page <http://tl9000.org/links.html>

The reported measurements are calculated into summary Performance Data Reports (PDRs) in a secure manner and made available to QuEST Forum members (monthly) and TL 9000 registrants (annually) so that they can compare their measurements with the industry as a whole. To make sure that comparable data is used, each data submitter must report in the proper product category. For example, a switch should be compared to other switches, and installation providers should be compared to other installers.

Proper product category selection is most important to assure that comparable data is submitted. When data is submitted to the secure measurements repository it must be in the proper product category. The reported data is placed into the product category data folders and that are then used to publish the PDRs, which include trend data for each measurement.

- Best in class
- Worst in class
- Industry average
- Monthly average

If data is not submitted in the correct product category the integrity of the information used to generate the PDRs is reduced, thus making the data of less value to the users of the TL 9000 PDRs.

Major Product Categories – Defined

From the product category tables referenced at <http://tl9000.org/links.html>

Category Code	Category Name	Definition
1	Switching	Equipment for the physical or virtual interconnection of communication channels in response to a signaling system. The switching category is broadly defined to include packet or circuit switched architectures.
2	Signaling and Network Control	Equipment for the provision of signaling, i.e., states applied to operate and control the component groups of a telecommunications circuit to cause it to perform its intended function. In general, there are five basic categories of signals commonly used in the telecommunications network: supervisory signals, information signals, address signals, control signals, and alerting signals. This category includes those signaling products that function within the telecommunications network and excludes possibly similar products that normally provide enhanced services outside the network, or on the customer premises such as ACD, IVR, or voice messaging systems.
3	Transmission Systems	Equipment for the connection of the switched and interoffice networks with individual customers. An integral part of the distribution network is the loop that connects the customer to the local central office (CO), thus providing access to the interoffice network.
4	Operations & Maintenance	Equipment and systems for the management, upkeep, diagnosis and repair of the communications network.
5	Common Systems	Any of a variety of specialized generic, shared equipment to support network elements. Common systems include power systems and the Network Equipment-Building System (NEBS) that provides space and environmental support for network elements. These systems are located in central offices and remote building locations.

Category Code	Category Name	Definition
6	Customer Premise and Enhanced Services	Equipment installed beyond the network demarcation point. Although commonly installed on the subscriber's premises, equipment with essentially identical function installed in the service provider's facility may also be classified as customer premises equipment.
7	Services	<p>In addition to purchasing tangible hardware or software products, customers may also acquire service from an organization. Services include activities such as network engineering, installation and commissioning, product maintenance, network operation, etc., where the organization is responsible for the conduct of the activity in accordance with customer defined requirements. Services may be thought of as the result generated by activities at the interface between the organization and the customer and by the organization's internal activities to meet the customer needs.</p> <p>NOTES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interface between the customer and the organization may be represented by personnel or equipment. • Customer activities at the interface with the organization may be essential to the service delivery. • Delivery or use of tangible products may form part of the service delivery. • A service may be linked with the manufacture and supply of tangible product. • A contracted service is one where a legal agreement is reached between the customer and the organization to provide a service. Contracted services are services offered for sale to companies outside of the organization's company or its subsidiaries. • An internal service is a service activity performed for internal customers within the same company as the organization.
8	Components and Sub-assemblies	Individual components or assemblies provided for use in telecommunications systems excluding those already covered by a specific product category in another product family. These items are typically used by other suppliers and not sold directly to service providers except as replacement parts.
9	End-Customer Services	End-user consumer and business customers acquire a vast variety of products from a service provider organization. These may be supplied on a buy, lease or rental basis and comprise services from "simple pre-paid wireless phone service to complex solutions or outsourced facilities management of a customer organization's entire telecommunications facilities.

It is important to note some basic differences in the product category tables to assist in making the proper selection. Review of the organization's [scope](#) statement should assist in focusing the selection on one of the 4 table items below.

Category(s)	Descriptions
1-6	These categories are primarily for suppliers of hardware and software products and are divided into sub categories focused on the specific function of the hardware or software product being sold to the customer. Included are products such as routers, switches, handsets and others.
7	This category is primarily for the provider of services and it is divided into sub categories focused on the specific type of service being provided. Included are services such as contract manufacturing, service center, repair and installation.
8	This category is primarily for the supply of sub-assemblies and components. It is divided into sub categories focused on the specific type of hardware/software component, sub-assembly, or tool being supplied. Included are products such as software components, optical sub-assemblies, and electronic assemblies.
9	This product category is for the supplier of end-customer products and services. It is typically used by service providers instead of suppliers. It encompasses such offerings as voice service, wireless service, transport networks and internet access.

Which Organizations Report In A Particular Product Category?

When making a product category selection it is often beneficial to determine which other organizations are reporting in a particular product category. The QuEST Forum makes some TL 9000 certified registration information public:

- Company Name
- ISO 9001 Scope of Registration
- TL 9000 Scope of Registration
- Exclusions and Exemptions
- CB (registrar) Name
- Product Categories
- Locations

The public website, tl9000.org, provides an interface to the Registration Management System (RMS) which is the database where the registration records are stored. It is easy to search for TL 9000 certified organizations that are reporting data in a particular product category. Start at tl9000.org then click on TL 9000 Registration from the main menu bar. Next select Certified Registrations from the left side menu and finally click on Advanced Search. Select the product category from the drop down list in the top search box then click on the button Search by Product Category. The RMS will return a list of organizations that are certified to TL 9000 in the selected product category as shown here for product category 1.2.9.1 “Core Routers”. Clicking on the registration name provides all the publicly available information about the registration including which product categories are included.

SEARCH RESULTS

Search Result

Product Category: 1.2.9.1 Core Routers

Registrations	Company Name
Cisco Systems - TL 3463	Cisco Systems
Dasan Networks Inc - TL 4394	Dasan Networks, Inc.
Nortel :MSS-Passport - TL 1944	Ericsson
Hangzhou H3C Technologies Co.,Ltd. - TL 6109	Hangzhou H3C Technologies Co.,Ltd.
Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd. - TL 2207	Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd.
Juniper Networks, Inc. - TL 3428	Juniper Networks, Inc.
NEC Network Products Ltd. Ichinoseki Plant - TL 1954	NEC Groups
NEC Corporation - IP Platform Group - TL 3452	
ZTE Corporation - TL 3161	ZTE Corporation

Click [here](#) to start a new search

Accredited TL 9000 Certification Bodies

QuEST Forum keeps a list of the TL 9000 Certification Bodies (CB), also known as registrars and Accreditation Bodies (AB) on the TL 9000 web site at tl9000.org. There is a great deal of material on this site. Some specific topics are:

- TL 9000 Certification Bodies (CB) List
- TL 9000 Accreditation Bodies (AB) List
- CB/Auditor Resources
- Qualification Requirements for Auditors
- Code of Practice for CBs/Auditors
- Auditor Time Chart
- NACE Codes
- e-audits

These resources are all accessed by going to the TL 9000 website at <http://tl9000.org> and clicking on the ABs/CBs/Auditors button in the main menu bar.

Scope of TL 9000 Registration

Reviewing the scope of TL 9000 registration is a good place to begin the process of product category selection. It outlines at a high level what products or services are covered under the TL 9000 QMS. Since it is acceptable to issue a TL 9000 registration by company, division or section, or a group of products or a particular product line, the scope statement helps provide focus for the selection of area to be certified to TL 9000.

Example Scope Statement #1 – HW & Software Systems Manufacturer

Design, Development, Manufacturing Operations and Support of Networking Solutions for the following product lines: DRS-1, x800, y800, z500, w7600, GGG 8800, GGG 8900, x0000, y0720, z2000, NMS x5310, NMS x5327, NMS x5454, NMS x5600, System Transport Manager, Solution Center (SC), Services Module (excluding other Line Cards) and including NMS Software and Port Adaptors. The Integration and Test Engineering group and the Technical Assistance Center (TAC) are included in their entirety.

Example #1 is a good example of a TL 9000 registration that is product specific. It would be likely that multiple product categories would be selected for such a registration scope. Services such as “Technical Assistance Center” would likely fall into PC 7.5 “Customer support services”. While products like “DRS-1” would likely fall into Product Category 1.2.9.1 “Core routers”. Note that it is best not to enter the exact product categories in the scope statement. Rather the product categories are listed in a separate section of the registration profile.

Example Scope Statement #2 – Systems Networks Manufacturer

Design, development, provision and servicing of Core and Edge IP Routers, Firewall VPN devices running Systems Networks Security Operating System

The scope statement in Example #2 is much more general in nature and will require the company to collect and report measurements of any and all core or IP routers that they supply that are still “generally available”. That conceivably could be two different product categories; 1.2.9.1 Core Routers and, 1.2.9.2 Edge Routers, as well as another product category for “Firewall VPN devices”, which would most likely be product category 6.6 “Internet Security Devices”

Example Scope Statement #3 – Installation Services

The provisioning and installation of central office equipment to specifications identified by telecommunications service providers.

The scope statement in Example #3 includes two different services. It would require the company to become certified in 7.1.1 Installation and 7.1.2 Provisioning.

Product Category Tables

Appendix A (The Product Category Tables) listed below is part of the TL 9000 standard and is updated approximately every 6-12 months to add, modify or clarify the product category tables. The current release of Appendix A of the Measurements Handbook may always be found on the QuEST Forum website at tl9000.org under the main menu item Handbooks. Click next on Product Category Tables in the left side menu under Measurements Handbook. The effective dates for each release is embedded in the documents on the web site and that release is used until superseded by the next revision.

There are periods of times, usually six months, where more than one Product Category Table can be used. It is the choice of the data submitter to choose one of the Product Category Tables during those periods.

List of Tables

Table A-1	Product Category Definitions
Table A-2	Measurement Applicability Table (Normalized Units)
Table A-3	Network Element Impact Outage*
Table A-4	Transmission Standard Designations and Conversions*
Table A-5	Optical and Electrical Equivalency*
Table A-6	Measurements Summary Listing*
Table A-7	TL 9000 Data Submission Labels*

*not normally used for product category selection

The “Primary Function” of the Product or Service

Product Category Definitions in Table A-1 of the product category tables referenced at <http://t19000.org/links.html> may also include an indicator for the “primary function” of the products assigned to that product category. In complex product categories the primary function is indicated in “bold” typeface within the table. That is, those complex product categories will have an indicated primary function. Bolded text in the product category definition indicates the primary function of the product category. This is the function to use for outage measurements. Please note that many product categories are not so complex to require amplification of “primary function”. Also, use of the example column in Table A-1 will assist in making a proper selection of product category. See Table A-1 excerpt below:

Category Code	Category Name	Definition	Examples
1.1	Circuit Switch	Equipment for the termination of subscriber lines and/or trunk lines and the dynamic interconnection of these ports or channels in a digital transmission facility. A circuit switch establishes a dedicated circuit, as opposed to a virtual circuit, in response to a signal. Stored Program Control (SPC) is the most common type of switching equipment used at end offices and tandem offices. These systems use either analog or digital switching. The switching system used must have the capability to send, receive and be actuated by signals, e.g., access line signals, or inter-office in-band or common-channel signaling. This category includes all circuit switches regardless of transmission medium, i.e., wire line or wireless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-office • Tandem • Tandem access • Remote • Service switching point (SSP) • Mobile switching center (MSC)
1.2.9.1	Core	Packet transport and routing equipment primarily intended for use in the core of the packet network connecting other packet network elements together. This equipment is intended to provide high reliability and availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP core router • Broadband multi-service • Transport protocol converters
3.2.1.2	Digital Cross Connect Systems	Equipment to provide a physical termination point for physical cables and individual conductors where changes in connections are performed electronically. These systems provide electrical cross-connection of network distribution facilities and equipment in the central office, electrical protection for conductive media, test access, temporary disconnection, and termination points for facilities and equipment. They may interface to the network either optically or metallically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital cross-connect system (DCS) • Electronic DSX
6.2.2	Fax Equipment	Equipment for sending or receiving facsimile (fax) over conventional voice-grade lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand alone fax machines • Combined fax/printers/copiers

Additionally, look for an indication of the typical location of the product in the network in the definition. For example, 1.2.9.1 Core routers are “in the core of the packet network connecting other packet network elements together” while 1.2.9.2 Edge routers are “at the edge of the core network” , 1.2.9.3 Access routers provide an access/aggregation point between customer premise equipment and the external network , and 6.2.7 CPE routers are located in the “home or small office.”

Maintenance

Product category selections will need to be reviewed periodically. As noted above, the Product Category Tables themselves are updated on a regular basis. Product categories may be split or combined, impacting your selection. Your product itself will likely change with time. It may evolve from one product category into another. An example of this would be a SONET/SDH product (3.2.2.1.2.1) to which an optical switching matrix is added. This new capability would move the product to the ROADM category (3.2.2.1.2.3)

Product Category Validation Program

QuEST Forum has instituted a program to actively validate an organization's product category selection, should a question be raised about that selection. A team of subject matter experts whose primary concern is the accuracy of the industry data statistics will review the organization's scope statement and publicly available product literature to determine the appropriateness of the product category selection. If there is still an issue, a request is sent to the organization for more information. If there is a problem, the team works with the organization through the TL 9000 Administrator to determine the correct product category. If a change is necessary, the TL 9000 Administrator works with the organization move or delete prior data submissions.

Appendix A

Principles for Construction of the Product Category

- Product categories shall be defined so that they can be clearly assigned within a hierarchy of classification.
- There are well-established rules for classification.
- Product categories should not be separated artificially if they can be logically aggregated.
- Product categories should have clear definitions, which lend themselves to unambiguous interpretation.
- For each category, the level to which measurements may be aggregated shall be defined.
- Each product category specification shall consist of standard elements.
- The placement of the product in the hierarchy will reflect the dominant use of the product.
- Terminology used shall reflect standard technical meanings; wherever possible aligned to relevant standards such as ITU-T, ETSI, ANSI, etc.

Rules for Classification of Products

TL 9000 Measurements Handbook – Appendix A

- The definitions of product categories in the TL 9000 Measurements Handbook Table A-1 shall be used by organizations in categorizing their products.
- An organization shall not classify a product in multiple product categories. Therefore, any product from an organization must be classified in exactly one product category.
- General-purpose products, such as computers, shall be classified by specific function, e.g., signaling, when provided as a system designed for that function. Otherwise, they shall be classified in a separate category, for example, Common Systems-Computers, designed for the general-purpose product.
- A product shall be classified according to its primary function. For example, a digital transmission facility product with performance monitoring will be classified as a transmission product instead of an operations and maintenance product.
- The standard for classification is the product category, not the possible uses for the product. For example, if a product classification falls in the Outside Plant category, all products that are consistent with that category will be classified as such, even if the exact same product is sometimes used in the customer premises and even if a particular organization's product is sold primarily into the customer premises market.