
Minimum Requirements for Credit Management (MRCM)

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VfCM

VEREIN für CREDIT MANAGEMENT e.V.



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Introduction

Current surveys confirm that an insufficiently executed credit management is one of the main reasons for the insolvency of companies. In the reverse consequence it is shown that the credit management contributes actively to the maintenance of the company and therefore has to take a duly status within the corporate management.

Those companies which have been attempting to deal with the processes regarding the origin and handling of debts more intensive, however, so far missed setting an example for a basis on which the corporate internal credit management could be further optimized and professionalized. So called "Best Practice" examples were the only source on the basis of which the companies could adopt suggestions regarding the arrangement of their credit management.

With the minimum requirements for credit management (MRCM) the interested companies now dispose of a guideline which describes the basic components of a functioning credit management. According to the motto "from the practice for the practice" it was particularly considered that the minimum requirements may be implemented in very different companies.

The minimum requirements certainly shall not be understood as "Best Practice Guide" in the sense of a best possible but rather as basic precondition for the further development of the company's own credit management up to the "Best Practice".

The possibility of certification of the corporate internal processes according to this is only a consequent step to prove towards interested third parties like shareholders or lenders that the company fulfils the minimum requirements for credit management and therefore has created an important precondition for the companies' maintenance.

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Introduction

With the newsletter 34 the German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority in 2002 published the “minimum requirements for the credit business of banks” (MRC). The MRC should be adhered to in the bank business in order to limit the risks within the credit business. They contain standards for the

- processes of the credit treatment
- control of the credit treatment
- intensive care
- treatment of problematic credits
- risk management

All this are topics which also shall be handled optimally in the corporate practice by means of the credit management. The members of the Association for Credit Management (VfCM) therefore discussed about a possible adoption of the MRC from the credit and corporate business. Notes on the following questions were compared intensively:

- What differs the credit management of companies from the credit management in banks and which consequences does this have for the organization and controlling of the credit granting?
- How could convenient (minimum) requirements for credit management of companies concretely look like?
- How should the credit function be organized and handled and who should be issued with which discretionary competence?

Several members of the VfCM submitted themselves in 2005 to define the minimum requirements for the corporate internal credit management (MRCM). The work peaked with the discussion of the “White Paper” with selected experts from the corporate practice at the University of Applied Sciences Bochum in August 2006. As a result of the workshop for one day with the representatives of banks, credit insurers, factoring companies, rating agencies as well as credit agencies a commonly supported version of the MRCM could be developed. According to the experts’ opinion the present MRCM offer a brilliant basis for the efficient controlling of the companies’ credit awarding.

The VfCM in corporation with the TÜV Rheinland on the basis of these MRCM has developed a certification for the corporate internal credit management which can be obtained now. In order to prepare for such certification it would seem to be useful to compare the existing processes and structures with the MRCM. It is advisable to check by means of the MRCM the rules of the credit policy and their operative implementation in the Credit Policy. By means of an explicit division of competences and a transparent formation of the (standardized) credit processes binding rules shall be established in the corporate practice which support the target of an active credit risk policy.

The VfCM would like to thank everybody who participated in the conceptual development, in the critical analysis and finally in the operative implementation of the MRCM. Without this support the target of the establishment of a credit standard for the corporate practice would not have been achieved.

May the MRCM find a quick acceptance in the corporate practice!

Prof. Dr. Bernd Weiß

1. Organization

1.1 The credit management is a function which shall be independent from sales.

The credit managements' staff may not work in sales and may not be bound by directives of the sales department. Depending on the organization depth of the company, the credit management, however, may be subordinated to the manager who also shall be responsible for sales.

1.2 The credit management shall be integrated in the operative tasks, particularly in the contractual agreements with (new) customers.

The credit management shall be integrated in the sales process in a way that all activities/decisions relevant for the credit management may occur earliest possible.

1.3 There shall be an active corporation with the sales department, the accounts receivable accounting and, where given, with the legal department.

Necessary information shall flow between the mentioned departments and the departments shall support each other in fulfilling their tasks/solving their problems. For example, the sales department supports the credit management in obtaining necessary information, the credit management informs the sales department about changes in the solvency of customers etc.

1.4 The processes for the granting and observation of suppliers' credits shall be regulated and documented.

It shall be documented in writing or electronically which work steps have to be taken in the awarding and observation of the granted suppliers' credits, who is responsible for the carrying out of the several tasks and which tools shall be used therefore. Usually, the documentation shall be made within the Credit Policy.

1.5 The Credit Policy shall be checked regularly for its currentness and, if required, shall be adjusted.

The instructions for the awarding and observation of the suppliers' credits shall be maintained adequately. It would seem to be useful to check them at least annually for their currentness and, if required, to make an update.

1.6 The Credit Policy shall be available for and familiar to the persons (also sales) involved.

It shall be made sure that all members of staff involved in the process of awarding and/or observation of suppliers' credits are integrated, know the companies' Credit Policy and, if necessary, have access to it. The access e.g. may be made sure through the handing over of a copy or through publication in the intranet.

1.7 The competences and authorizations shall be regulated in a competence catalogue (Manual of authorities) which is regularly checked for its currentness and, if required, shall be adjusted.

Within the competence catalogue it shall be regulated which function is responsible for which process within the awarding and observation of credit and which decision-making authority the respective function has. At least the decisions according to annex 1 of the MRCM should be regulated. The competences can be limited to a certain period of time, amount or by means of other criteria like e.g. risk category. It would seem to be useful to check the competence catalogue at least annually for its currentness and, if necessary, to make an update.

1.8 The competence catalogue shall be available for and familiar to the persons (also sales) involved.

It shall be made sure that all members of staff involved in the process of awarding and/or observation of suppliers' credits know the companies' competence catalogue and, if required, have access to it. The access e.g. may be made sure through the handing over of a copy or through publication in the intranet.

1.9 The adherence to the competences and authorizations shall be observed.

By means of adequate measures it shall be guaranteed that only those members of staff make decisions and act who have the corresponding competences and authorizations. This may happen e.g. through electronic assignment of permissions in the data processing system or through at least annual randomized checking of documented procedures.

1.10 It shall be regulated which decisions within the authorizations have to be comprehensibly documented.

In order to observe the adherence to the authorizations and to comprehend decisions also at a future date, it is necessary to determine those proceedings within the awarding and observation of credit which require documentation. At least the processes according to annex 2 of the minimum requirements for credit management (MRCM) should be documented.

1.11 Ways of escalation shall be defined in case that a superior position has to revise or confirm a decision.

In the case of a disagreement about a decision between the several functions it shall be stipulated which subordinated function is responsible for the confirmation or amendment of the decision. For example, the conflict between the sales department and the credit management about a credit limit may be escalated to the superior level.

2. Staff

2.1 The members of staff who work in the several processes shall produce qualifications relevant for their assignment.

The staff shall be expert and through prior knowledge or a corresponding training/adjustment dispose of the required know how in order to handle the tasks in an appropriate way. The staffs' knowledge to the greatest extent should correspond with the required knowledge specified in the job profile.

2.2 By means of adequate training and advanced training measures it shall be guaranteed that the qualification standard corresponds to the current level of developments.

It shall be made sure that the staff will undergo further education in the case of amended qualification demands. An example for this could be a modification of the legal basis.

2.3 There shall be arrangements about the responsible substitutes for absent personnel.

It shall be regulated which member of staff is substituted by another member of staff. If possible, the separation of functions between sales and credit management shall be sustained. Therefore, an employee from the credit management should not be substituted by an employee from the sales department.

3. Controlling

3.1 By means of the companies' current risk situation it shall be determined regularly which key figures are relevant for the measurement of the economic and/or processual success.

The company shall check regularly which key figures are relevant for its own controlling (e.g. DSO, % overdues, bad debt losses proportional to the total turnover which are relevant for the operating results, key figures for the process controlling, client portfolio etc.) It shall be recommended to check at least annually if the key figures used help the company to control its own risk.

3.2 The key figures used for the company controlling shall be measurable, comprehensible and comparable.

Objective key figures shall be used which correspond to the criteria mentioned. Additionally, also other non-objective key figures may be used.

3.3 The values used for the determination of the key figures result from reliable sources.

It shall be guaranteed that the values used for the calculation of key figures are correct and may not be manipulated.

3.4 The relevant key figures shall be determined regularly and be reported to the responsible function.

In order to early recognize negative tendencies the relevant key figures shall be determined regularly and reported to the responsible authority. It would seem to be useful to calculate the key figures at least every 3 months.

- 3.5 Target values shall be determined for future periods of time.**
Within the context of the corporate planning target values shall be stipulated for the defined key figures. They should be at least determined for the following financial year.
- 3.6 Comparisons shall be drawn between target values and past values.**
In order to recognize possible differences at an early stage the key figures determined in the reporting procedures shall be compared to respectively stipulated target values.
- 3.7 Provided that the fulfilment of the target values appears to be endangered it shall be checked if convenient measures have to be taken.**
If the determined values are worse than the target values it shall be checked if convenient measures for the achievement of target have to be taken. This may happen e.g. by an amendment of the credit awarding practice or by stricter dunning. Possibly, also a correction of the target values may be required.
- 3.8 The autonomy of the reporting procedures shall be guaranteed.**
In order to avoid a conflict of interests the reporting shall be created or observed by a function which is independent from the result of the key figures.
- 3.9 The definition of the remuneration and incentive systems shall not contradict the stipulated targets.**
For remuneration and incentive systems applied only such targets may be used which either help to achieve the according to 3.5 aimed target values or at least do not considerably influence them negatively.
- 3.10 Key figures may be used as the basis of the profit-related remuneration.**
The according to 3.1 defined key figures optionally also may be used in the context of a remuneration and incentive system for the staff of the credit management and/or for sales.

4. Processes

4.1 Processes in general

- 4.1.1 The process procedures and possible ways of decision shall be documented in a process procedure plan.**
It shall be documented which work steps have to be taken at which time, respectively, in which chronology or in which dependence they have to be taken. For those work steps which contain a decision the possible process procedures, depending on the result have to be demonstrated.
- 4.1.2 The process schedule shall be checked regularly and, if required, shall be adjusted.**
The process schedule shall be maintained adequately. It would seem to be useful to check it at least annually for its currentness and, if required, shall be adjusted.
- 4.1.3 The process schedule shall be available for and familiar to the persons involved (also sales).**
It shall be guaranteed that all members of staff who are involved in the process of awarding and/or supervision of suppliers' credits know the companies' process schedule and, if required, have access to it. The accessibility e.g. may be made sure through handing over of a copy or through publication in the intranet.
- 4.1.4 The adherence to the minimum requirements on the processes shall also be guaranteed in case of partial or complete transfer to third parties.**
Many companies in the field of credit management cooperate with external service providers like e.g. collection agencies, lawyers and credit insurances. If processes relevant for the minimum requirements for credit management (MRCM) are outsourced to a third party, it shall be made sure that also the external service provider adheres to the minimum requirements relevant for the outsourced process. This shall at least be proved by a written confirmation of the service provider. No external audit at the service provider shall be required.

4.2 Credit assessment

4.2.1 The final credit assessment shall be carried out by a function which is independent from sales.

No decision on the customers' solvency shall be made by the sales department. Usually, the credit management should be responsible for this matter. The sales department may also be part of the credit assessment by providing information or by making its own assessment of creditworthiness.

4.2.2 By means of precise criteria it shall be defined to which extent and on the basis of which information a credit assessment is made.

It shall be defined which criteria (amount of credit demand, extent of the transaction etc.) determine the information (e.g. internal score, balance sheet, credit information etc.) have to be taken into consideration for the credit assessment. The required information therefore may vary depending on the fulfilment of certain criteria. Therefore customers with a higher demand for credit should undergo a more comprehensive credit assessment than customers with a low credit demand.

4.2.3 Every new customer to whom a suppliers' credit is granted shall undergo a credit assessment according to the regulations according to 4.2.2.

It shall be made sure that every customer to whom a suppliers' credit is granted shall undergo a credit assessment according to the stipulated regulations. For customers who pay with service provision, cash on delivery or in advance no credit assessment shall be required since here no credit is granted.

4.2.4 All documents used for the first and current credit assessment shall be systematically stored for a specified period of time.

In order to also comprehend the credit assessment at a future date all documents shall be stored in a way that they may be made available, if required. The company shall define when the documents may be shred at the earliest (e.g. 1 year after the end of the business relation).

4.2.5 The credit assessment shall be terminated before service provision.

In order to prevent that service provision is disbursed to new customers with a bad solvency the credit assessment should be terminated before service provision. In companies where this is not possible for corporate political or processual reasons, the credit assessment may be followed by the service provision.

4.3 Solvency control

4.3.1 The existing customers shall be subject to a permanent solvency control.

The credit assessment for existing customers must always be updated. Amendments in the customers' solvency shall be recognized at short notice.

4.3.2 Customers shall be observed permanently on the occurrence of early warning indicators.

It shall be made sure that so called early warning indicators like changes in payment behaviour, exceeding of credit limits etc. are recognized at short notice and are taken into consideration for the credit assessment.

4.3.3 If early warning indicators occur appropriate measures shall be taken.

In case of early warning indicators at least the credit assessment of the affected customer shall be checked and, if necessary, be amended. Additionally, further measures like e.g. the securing of debts, reduction of the credit limit, discussing the matter with the customer or imposing a delivery stop should be taken.

4.3.4 The payment method and possible changes in the customers' payment method shall have influence on the customers' rating.

The payment behaviour of a customer is an important component of the credit rating and therefore shall be integrated in the customers' credit assessment. Also deteriorations in the payment method shall be a criterion for a possible decreasing solvency of the customer and shall be adequately taken into consideration for the customers' credit assessment and supervision.

4.4 Risk classification

4.4.1 The rating to a risk class shall be made by a function which is independent from sales.

The customers' assignment to a risk class must not be made by the sales department. Usually, the credit management shall be responsible.

4.4.2 Conclusive risk classes shall be defined.

The company shall determine how many risk classes are used and how they should be named (e.g. A, B, C etc.) as well as which meaning the respective risk class has (e.g. high, medium, low risk). Also special risk classes for certain customer groups like e.g. affiliated companies or cash users may be established.

4.4.3 Criteria for the classification to the several risk classes shall be defined.

Criteria shall be determined according to which the customers are assigned to the respective risk classes. The assignment to the several risk classes, if possible, shall be made by means of objective criteria like e.g. internal scores, an external solvency index or by the calculated failure probability.

4.4.4 Each customer shall be attributed to a risk class.

Each customer shall be provided with a risk class. If technically possible, it would seem to be useful to deposit the customers' risk class in the credit master data.

4.4.5 The attribution to the risk class continuously shall be reviewed and, if required, shall be adjusted.

Due to the permanent solvency control it may be necessary to reclassify the affected customer to another risk class. The amendment of the risk class shall be made at short notice.

4.4.6 If general allocations (e.g. for small customers) to a risk class are planned, criteria shall be defined.

In case the non time based customers are allocated to a risk class without comprehensive risk classification, explicit criteria (e.g. amount of credit demand) shall be defined based on which the risk class globally can be allocated.

4.5 Credit limitation

4.5.1 The allocation of the credit limit shall be made by a function (CM) which is independent from sales.

The credit limit shall not be determined by the sales department. Usually, the credit management shall be responsible for this. However, the sales department may calculate the customers' credit demand and suggest an appropriate credit limit.

4.5.2 A provision regarding the determination of credit limits shall exist.

The company shall define if the credit limit is always awarded in the full amount of the accepted risk independent from the customers' need and therefore may be notably higher than the credit demand or if the credit demand is compared to the accepted risk and the respectively lower value (if applicable plus buffer) is granted as credit limit. In this case despite higher credit worthiness, however, only that limit would be granted to the customer which he requires for covering his need. If the company uses the credit demand for the determination of the credit limit, furthermore it shall be regulated how the credit demand has to be calculated.

4.5.3 The credit limit shall be stipulated to a maximum amount of the accepted risk.

Credit limits may be awarded to a maximum amount of the accepted risk. In case the customers' credit demand is higher than the accepted risk, the credit limit either shall be determined only to the amount of the accepted risk or adequate measures like e.g. obtaining securities or reduction of the credit demand through shortening the payment period shall be taken which make it possible to establish a credit limit as high as the customers' need.

4.5.4 There shall be a regulation concerning the granting of a credit limit to companies/persons affiliated with each other.

The company shall define if customers who are economically affiliated with each other (like e.g. corporations, partnerships and their associates) for the purpose of a collective awarding of credit limit are centralized in a borrower unit or may be considered as individuals.

4.5.5 Customers to whom a suppliers' credit was granted shall be provided with a credit limit.

For each customer who obtains services on account a credit limit shall be determined. If technically possible it would seem to be useful to deposit the customers' credit limit in the credit master data.

4.5.6 The determination of the credit limit shall be documented (if functional on standardized credit determining templates).

Each determination of a credit limit shall be adequately documented in writing or electronically. On the basis of the documentation it shall be comprehensible who has determined the credit limit at which time and to which amount. If appropriate, also further related information may be documented. In case of standardized transactions the use of a form seems to be adequate.

4.5.7 The granting of credit limit against the recommendation of the credit management shall be documented.

In case the credit management is outvoted by an authorized function when stipulating a credit limit, this shall be documented in order to comprehend at a future date that this is a matter of a subordinated decision and to comprehend who and when the decision was made.

4.5.8 Customers to whom no credit limit can be granted shall be marked appropriately.

Customers to whom no suppliers' credit is granted shall be marked in a way, that delivery/service is only possible against cash before delivery, cash on delivery or spot payment. Delivery should be stopped for customers who shall be excluded from service provision.

4.5.9 Each service provision is credited against the credit limit at short notice.

In order to supervise the determined credit limits it shall be required to immediately credit each service provision against the credit limit. If provided services are not invoiced at short notice (e.g. in case of collective settlement) the uninvoiced services also should be credited against the credit limit.

4.5.10 It shall be defined which further business transactions are credited against the credit limit.

It shall be defined if and possibly how other business transactions like e.g. credit notes, complained invoices, orders etc. besides the already provided delivery/services shall be credited against the credit limit. For example, a complained invoice may be excluded from charging on the credit limit, a credit note may be integrated and therefore may reduce the credit risk.

4.5.11 The credit limits continuously shall be observed on possible exceedances.

The current credit risk continuously shall be compared to the granted credit limit. Occurring exceedances of the credit limit, if necessary, under consideration of a defined tolerance value shall be recognized at short notice. In terms of a pro active limit supervision the company may also define percentage marginal values (e.g. 80% of the limit). In case of their achievement early measures for prevention of the limit exceedance may be taken.

4.5.12 Appropriate measures shall be defined which are initiated in case of a limit exceedance.

The company shall define measures which have to be taken when limit exceedances occur. The measures may vary, depending on the existence of certain criteria (like e.g. extent of limit exceedance, risk class of the affected customer).

4.6 Terms and conditions of payment

4.6.1 Payment arrangements shall be made with every customer.

It shall be made sure that, in general, with all customers payment arrangements are made. This may happen through general arrangements of standard payment periods or through individual arrangements with several customers that may vary depending on the order.

4.6.2 Standard payment periods as well as a maximum payment period shall be defined up to which corresponding payment periods may be agreed upon.

The company shall define one or more standard payment period as well as a limit up to which payment periods may be agreed upon. Furthermore, it should be determined to which extent the customers' solvency has influence on the payment period. In this way, certain standard payment periods may be excluded for customers with a low degree of creditworthiness.

4.6.3 There shall be a provision regarding the agreement of individual terms of payment.

It shall be regulated which function is authorized to stipulate terms of payment with the customer which diverge from standard.

4.6.4 The adherence to the terms of payment shall be observed continuously.

The due date of debts shall be observed permanently. Overdue debts shall be recognized at short notice.

4.6.5 Convenient measures shall be defined which are initialized in case of payment period exceedances.

The company has to define measures which have to be taken when overdue debts occur. The measures may vary depending on the existence of certain criteria (like e.g. due dates, debt amount, risk class of the affected customer etc.).

4.6.6 Agreements shall be made with the customer which authorize the company to terminate arrangements made without notice and/or to demand immediate repayment of all open debts if the customer does not meet his payment obligation at the due date.

Adequate agreements shall be made with the customer according to which all open debts become due if the customer does not meet his payment obligations as agreed upon or if he becomes illiquid. Furthermore, by means of corresponding agreements it shall be made sure that the company may terminate existing supply contracts/service level agreements without notice in case of important reasons like e.g. the customers' insolvency. These arrangements may be made e.g. within individual contracts or through integration in the general terms and conditions.

4.6.7 There shall be a regulation concerning the prolongation of debts/acceptance of instalment arrangements.

It has to be defined which qualifications shall be defined in order to grant an instalment arrangement or a prolongation. Furthermore, it has to be regulated which function is authorized to agree partial payment arrangements or extensions of payment with the customer. The authorizations may be limited for a certain period of time or according to the amount or by means of other criteria like e.g. the risk class.

4.7 Securing of debt

4.7.1 Standard securities shall be defined which are accepted as credit security.

It shall be defined which kind of security generally can be accepted. Additionally, the various kinds of securities may be subdivided into different security classes, e.g. according to effectiveness of the securing of debt.

4.7.2 If useful, the retention of title (simple, extended or enlarged) shall be agreed with the customers.

For those transactions where the retention of title can be applied usefully, a binding agreement with the customers shall be made. For those consumer products, services, or goods where an enforcement of the retention of title may not be applicable, a corresponding agreement shall be made.

- 4.7.3 A provision shall be made concerning the acceptance of securities which diverge from standard.**
It shall be regulated which function is authorized to accept securities which were not defined as standard securities.
- 4.7.4 The value of securities shall be checked before acceptance.**
It shall be checked if and to which amount the agreed security in case of application may be realized. In case of securing through a third party (guarantor) it shall be required to also check the solvency of the guarantor.
- 4.7.5 The securities' amount stated shall be determined by a function (CM) which is independent from sales.**
The sales department may only stipulate the value of a security if this value is checked by another function which is independent from sales. It would seem to be useful if the credit management determines the value of the accepted securities.
- 4.7.6 The value as well as securities' amount stated shall be rechecked at regular intervals and, if required, shall be adjusted.**
Since a majority of the securities is subject to value fluctuations all securities shall be regularly rechecked for their value and for their amount stated.
- 4.7.7 The intervals for checking the value and the amount stated of the several kinds of securities shall be stipulated in the Credit Policy.**
Depending on the kind of security different intervals for the checking of the value shall be scheduled. The interval for the check may also be determined by means of possibly constituted security classes. The corresponding terms shall be defined in the Credit Policy.
- 4.7.8 Possible terms of expiration shall be observed and, if required, measures for the prolongation of the security or for a replacement purchase shall be taken.**
Securities which are only available for a limited period of time, shall be observed in a way that possibly required measures for the prolongation or replacement of the security may be initialized. On expiry of the period of time expired securities no longer may be regarded as securities containing value.
- 4.7.9 The documents/certificates shall be deposited in a fireproof, theft-proof and orderly manner.**
In order to prevent the loss of the securities, the corresponding certificates and documents shall be stored in a way that they neither may be abstracted or destroyed nor get lost. The documents shall be deposited in a way that they are retrievable in case of application.
- 4.7.10 The type and value of the securities as well as possible maturities shall be documented adequately.**
In order to determine the kind, amount and maturity of the available securities at any time, information shall be documented in writing or electronically. Therefore, it would seem to be useful to deposit the information in the credit master data or to have a record in a security index.
- 4.7.11 Existence intimidating risks shall be secured.**
Those credit risks which in case of bad debt losses threaten the companies' existence shall be secured adequately. This occurs particularly in case of correlation risks. The securing may occur e.g. through securities or through conclusion of a credit insurance.

4.8 Customers' master data

- 4.8.1 There shall be a provision concerning the creation and amendment of customers' master data.**
It shall be defined which function is responsible for the creation and amendment of customers' master data and which qualifications (e.g. written notice, verification measures, etc.) have to be fulfilled for the creation or amendment of master data.

4.8.2 Standards shall be defined which data are required for the creation of a new customer.

It shall be defined which data at least have to be available for the creation of master data for customers. It is advisable to include in the customers' master data beside the name/company and address also the telephone and fax number as well as the email address and account details. For private persons furthermore the date of birth may be documented.

4.8.3 It shall be guaranteed that only in case of urgent reasons several accounts receivable are created for one customer.

In order to guarantee the observation of the granted credit limits it shall be required that for one customer only one account receivable is kept. Only for urgent reasons several accounts receivable may be kept which, however, have to be checked for credit limit exceedings in an adequate way.

4.8.4 It shall be made sure that the customers' master data contain the correct and complete companies' name/name and address of the customer.

The customers' master data always shall be kept updated so that in case of a prosecution it is guaranteed that the correct debtor is addressed. Particular attention should be paid on the correct spelling and reproduction of the legal form.

4.8.5 Required amendments in the customers' master data shall be made promptly.

In order to avoid the issuing of wrong documents (invoices, contracts, etc.) it shall be guaranteed that necessary amendments are implemented in the master data as soon as possible.

4.8.6 Amendments in the customers' master data shall be documented.

In order to guarantee the auditability it shall be documented appropriately which components of the customers' master data were amended at what time and in which way.

4.8.7 If technical conditions allow for it, the credit limit, the risk class and possibly an available security should be deposited in the credit master data.

Beside the general master data also the so called credit master data should be deposited and maintained.

4.8.8 Setup and amendment of credit master data shall be made by a function (CM) which is independent from sales.

Credit master data (credit limit, risk class, securities, etc.) may not be initialized or amended by the sales department.

4.9 Invoicing

4.9.1 The invoicing shall be complete, correct and prompt.

It shall be guaranteed that each service provision is invoiced at full volume without any unnecessary delay. If deliveries and services made are calculated in block accountings it shall be made sure that the invoicing does not take place later than at the date stipulated. In order to avoid the reclamation of invoices it shall be guaranteed that the invoicing is made carefully and correctly.

4.9.2 The invoices shall be sent real promptly.

Invoices raised shall be dispatched without any unnecessary delay.

4.9.3 The due date shall be stated on the invoice.

The payment period existing due to the payment agreement shall be converted into a fixed payment date and be noted on the invoice. Therefore the customer knows the exact due date and in case of failing to pay at due date he is defaulting already on the following day.

4.9.4 In case of using the credit note procedure the prompt receipt of the credit note shall be observed.

If payment was agreed in the credit note procedure it shall be observed if the credit notes come in within the agreed period of time. If payments do not come in within the stipulated period of time convenient measures shall be taken.

4.9.5 Received credit notes shall be checked promptly for completeness and correctness.

It shall be checked if received credit notes were issued correctly and if the services/deliveries made were accounted thoroughly. Possibly occurring reclamations shall be addressed instantly and shall be observed regarding their prompt administration.

4.10 Payment transactions

4.10.1 Standard payment methods shall be defined which may be agreed with the customers.

The company shall define which payment methods generally (bank transfer, draft, debit note in the direct debit or direct debiting service, bills of exchange etc.) can be agreed on with the customers.

4.10.2 Receipts of payment shall be booked promptly.

Payments received shall be booked against the corresponding open positions without unnecessary delays. Receipts of payment which cannot be attributed to open positions directly until clarification shall be booked on the corresponding customers' account.

4.10.3 Possible payment differences shall be recognized and clarified at short notice.

If the payment amount does not correspond to the sum of the positions to be balanced the resulting difference shall be determined and be solved promptly.

4.10.4 There shall be a regulation stipulating who is responsible for the solving of payment differences.

It shall be defined which function is responsible for the clarification of payment differences.

4.10.5 There shall be a regulation concerning the writing off of payment differences.

It shall be determined up to which percentage and amount limits are to be set up to which payment differences can be written off without having to try to solve these differences. It shall be defined which function is responsible for the writing off of payment differences which exceed the limit stipulated.

4.10.6 Payments which cannot be allocated shall be clarified at short notice.

If received payments initially cannot be attributed to a customers' account or to an open position these positions shall be clarified promptly and then attributed to the corresponding customer/ position. The company shall determine a period of time wherein payments which cannot be allocated have to be solved.

4.10.7 There shall be a provision regarding which function is responsible for the solving of unassigned payments.

It shall be defined which function is responsible for the unassigned payments.

4.11 Dunning

4.11.1 A dunning strategy shall be defined which contains regulations concerning beginning and end, frequency, amount and kind of the reminders.

The company shall determine when its own dunning is used (e.g. X days after due date, amount due > X etc.), in which intervals shall be reminded (e.g. every 5 days etc.), how often and in which way the customer shall be reminded (e.g. letter, telephone etc.). The dunning activities also may vary depending on the accomplishment of the determined criteria (e.g. amount of the sum due, risk class of the customer etc.).

4.11.2 If economically useful, immediately after termination of the last dunning activity consequent measures for financial exactions shall be taken.

If the dunning activities remain unsuccessful it shall be checked if the debt can be exacted in an economically useful scope. If this is the case, further exaction measures (lawyer, collection, court collection proceedings etc.) shall be initialized at short notice.

4.11.3 There shall be a provision concerning the granting and removal of dunning blocks.

It shall be determined which function is authorized to interrupt respectively to continue current dunning activities for several customers. It shall be guaranteed that only authorized persons may place respectively may remove dunning blocks. Furthermore, provisions can be made according to which dunning blocks are only admissible for a defined period of time (e.g. 30 days).

4.11.4 Positions/customers which are blocked for dunning regularly shall be observed by a function independent from sales and, if required, shall be adjusted.

It shall be checked regularly if all customers and positions blocked for dunning are justifiably excluded from the dunning activities. The sales department may support this check but shall not solely be responsible for it. Unjustified or no longer necessary dunning blocks shall be removed at short notice.

4.11.5 Dunning activities shall be documented.

In order to reconstruct in which manner and at what time customers with overdue debts have been reminded the activities shall be documented adequately. Apart from the amount reminded about, date of the reminder and how many prior reminders have been without result, particularly it should be comprehensible if customers regularly pay their bills due not before beginning of the dunning activities.

4.12 Reclamation management

4.12.1 A provision shall exist stipulating who is responsible for the dealing with reclamations.

It shall be defined which function is responsible for the dealing with reclamations.

4.12.2 The credit management/dunning department shall be informed about the disagreement of invoices due to reclamations at short notice.

In order to stop, respectively, to prohibit the dunning activities for controversial invoices, it shall be guaranteed that the corresponding function is informed about existing reclamations at an early stage.

4.12.3 Reclamations which have led to the disagreement of the invoice shall be solved promptly.

In order to reconstitute the customers' willingness to pay present reclamations shall be solved as early as possible.

4.12.4 In case only one part of the invoice is controversial the indisputable amount, if economically useful, shall be exacted from the customer.

If economically useful, the customer shall be asked to pay the indisputable part of the complained invoice.

4.12.5 The credit management/dunning department shall be informed about the dealing with reclamations at short notice.

In order to continue the dunning activities for controversial invoices handled so far it shall be guaranteed that the corresponding function is informed about reclamations settled.

4.13 Delivery stops

4.13.1 Customer/delivery stops to avoid further service provision shall be imposed.

On customers who shall be excluded from future service provisions a delivery stop shall be imposed.

4.13.2 There shall be a provision concerning the imposing and lifting of delivery stops.

It shall be defined which function has to decide over the placing and lifting of delivery stops. Furthermore, those incidents (e.g. reaching of a certain dunning level, return debit notes, deterioration of the solvency etc.) shall be defined on their occurrence the placing of a delivery stop has to be taken into consideration.

4.13.3 The adherence to delivery stops imposed shall be observed.

It shall be guaranteed that imposed delivery stops or customer stops are obeyed. If, however, a service provision has been provided the company shall be able to recognize this and to act correspondingly.

4.13.4 The sales department shall be informed about delivery stops and their lifting and therefore shall stop, respectively, reactivate further sales activities.

In order to organize its sales activities optimally the sales department shall be informed about imposed, respectively, lifted delivery stops.

4.13.5 The placing and lifting of delivery stops shall be documented.

In order to guarantee the comprehensibility of placed and lifted delivery stops, respectively, customer stops it shall be documented who has arranged what at which time.

4.14 Financial exactions

4.14.1 Before starting the court collection proceedings/handing over to an external service provider it shall be guaranteed that the preconditions for the debtors' delay are given.

It shall be made sure that only those debts are transferred to an external exaction for which the debtor effectively is in arrears.

4.14.2 The limitation periods shall be observed regularly and in case of imminent limitation, measures for the interruption of time shall be taken.

All debts effectively shall be protected from lapsing. It would seem to be useful to at least check at the end of the year respectively if for correspondingly old debts effective measures for the interruption of time were taken.

4.14.3 If there is no handling, respectively observation through third parties, effectless enforced titles shall be checked regularly for their enforceability and, if required, shall be brought to foreclosure.

Debts remained in the company which are titled but not yet enforced successfully at defined intervals shall be checked for a possibly successful reinforcement. The observation of titled debts also may be carried out by external third parties like e.g. lawyers or collection agencies. Hereof excluded shall be titles which e.g. due to insolvency proceedings are not enforceable anymore.

4.15 Specific value adjustment/Write-offs

4.15.1 There shall be a provision concerning the specific value adjustment and write-off of debts.

It shall be regulated which function is authorized to deal with value adjustments and write-offs of debts. The company shall determine criteria according to which debts have to be value adjusted, respectively, written off. For example, a certain amount may be set according to its lower deviation in case the enforcement of a debt is not economically useful and therefore shall be written off.

4.15.2 The fiscal parameters for the value adjustment and write-off of debts shall be considered.

The company shall consider the legal requirements within the value adjustment and write-off.

4.15.3 Periods shall be defined after whose expiry overdue debts have to be value adjusted.

Since the realization probability decreases the longer the debt subsists, age limits shall be defined after whose achievement the corresponding debts have to be value adjusted. (e.g. 90 or 180 days after maturity). Also a percentage need for value adjustment for different age limits may be determined.

4.15.4 The writing-off of debts and the specific value adjustment of debts shall be documented.

In order to guarantee the comprehensibility of write-offs and value adjustments they shall be documented in writing or electronically. By means of the documentation it shall be comprehensible which amount for which customer and for which reason was written off/value adjusted by which function.

4.15.5 Before debts are written off due to insolvency, existing securities shall be realized, if economically useful.

Before debts are written off it shall be checked if securities exist and if they may be realized adequately. The realization of securities only should be refused if the realization would be costlier than the amount to be realized. Write-offs due to other reasons (e.g. goodwill) shall not be affected hereof.

5. Systems

5.1 In case the systems relevant for the credit management are not available on a long-term basis a documented emergency plan shall exist.

Alternative processes shall be described which are applied in case of failure of the system required for the credit management.

5.2 The emergency plan shall be available for and familiar to the members of staff responsible.

It shall be guaranteed that the responsible members of staff know the emergency plan and have access, if required.

5.3 The emergency plan shall be checked regularly and shall be adjusted, if required.

The emergency plan shall be maintained adequately. It would seem to be useful to at least check it for currentness once a year and to update, if required.

6. Auditing

6.1 The adherence to the processes, rules and competences shall be checked regularly by a function which acts independently from the credit management.

At least annually an internal audit shall take place where the adherence to the most important requirements shall be checked. The audit shall be carried out by a function which acts independent from the credit management.

List of abbreviations

GTCT	General Terms and Conditions of Trade
CM	Credit Management
DPS	Data Processing System
etc.	et cetera
SVA	Special Value Adjustment
MRCM	Minimum Requirements for Credit Management
resp.	respectively
e.g.	for example

Glossary

Audit	Investigation procedure which serves to evaluate the processes regarding the fulfilment of requirements and directives
DSO	Days Sales Outstanding
Special value adjustment	consideration of recognized and concretely conceivable credit risks of individual debts in the balance sheet
process of escalation function	sequence of the delegation of decisions on a higher decision level separated range of objectives and responsibilities within the corporate organization structure
Intranet	same technique like the internet, however, the access is limited to determined members of an organization/company
Correlation risk	several credit risks which reach or exceed the companies' risk viability
Competence	here: responsibility
Debtor unit	grouping of several natural or legal persons to one debtor. Debtor units emerge from the existence of a predominant influence (e.g. between allied companies) or when the persons form a risk unit (e.g. partnership and its associates)
Credit Policy	Binding instructions for all processes regarding the granting of suppliers' credits
Credit master data	part of the customers' master data, which document the information relevant for the granting of credits
Delay	here: delayed payment A debtor is in arrears when he has not corresponded to his payment commitment despite time lapse or reminder and is responsible for this delay

Enclosures

Enclosure 1:

Authorizations which according to 1.7 MRCM at least shall be regulated:

- determination of the credit limit
- approval of payment conditions which diverge from the standard terms of payment or exceed the maximum period of payment
- acceptance of instalment agreements
- acceptance of securities which diverge from standard
- imposing of dunning blocks
- lifting of delivery stops
- write-off of debts

Enclosure 2:

Procedures which according to 1.10 MRCM at least shall be documented:

- determination of the credit limit
- granting of a credit limit against recommendation of the credit management
- amendments in the customers' master data
- dunning activities
- imposing and lifting of delivery stops
- write-off and value adjustment of debts

Notes

Notes

Who is the Verein für Credit Management e.V.?

In connection with the increasing interest for the credit management in all sectors in October 2001 the **Verein für Credit Management e.V.** was founded under the patronage of several credit managers.

In April 2002 the start event of the Verein für Credit Management e.V. took place. Since that day the Verein für Credit Management e.V. establishes itself in Germany. In the meantime more than 550 credit managers belong to the Verein für Credit Management e.V. (date: October 2006) and form the largest association independent from a corporation for debt managers and credit managers in Germany.

Targets:

In October 2002 the Verein für Credit Management e.V. published its first professional journal “**Der Credit Manager**” according to its motto “from the credit manager for the credit manager”. The journal is published every 3 months and contains all topics regarding the credit management. Especially the latest developments as well as practical experiences are reported.

Since the 1st of January 2003 the VfCM e.V. is a member of the Federation of the European Credit Management Associations (FECMA). The FECMA is a consolidation of the European credit management associations and forms an Europe-wide network for credit managers. The members of the national associations therefore may access a network of more than 15.000 credit managers from all European countries and Israel.

Up to now the VfCM e.V. may look back to several interesting and well-attended events. Regional events and credit management forums hosted by the VfCM are taken chances of members and interested persons to swap ideas or to participate in interesting and informative lectures. The annual Federal Congress offers a top-class platform where experienced credit managers give lectures and debate about the current developments in the credit management.

By means of a corporation with the University of Applied Sciences Bochum embodied by Prof. Dr. Bernd Weiß the association succeeded already in March 2003 to offer the qualification programme for becoming a certified credit manager according to international guidelines. After the certificate awarding to the first certified credit managers in March 2004 the qualification programme for becoming a CCM is offered annually at the University of Applied Sciences Bochum. The qualification programme contains the scientific aspects of an attractive credit management as well as the practical experiences of many credit managers. The qualification programme beside the necessary skills in form of judicial, organizational and methodical competence in the field also imparts successful strategies for the establishment of an efficient credit policy, shows ways to a successful collection of debts and informs about the latest system developments for the credit management. Altogether the qualification programme contains 14 modules which are completed with a practice-oriented project work. A high degree of practical relevance of the subjects taught allows for a direct and quick application on the own company and the own work place. The participants already in the beginning of their participation benefit from the imparted knowledge and from the experiences. After their graduation the fully trained credit managers are able to build and optimize a companies' credit management. For the company this means a sustainable increase of the companies' value and a notable decrease of failures and outstandings.

The VfCM in corporation with the AGA business association in Hamburg and with the University of Applied Sciences Aschaffenburg offers a further qualification programme for becoming a Certified Credit Controller. This four part workshop is conceived as subject qualification which enables the participants for the practice of the credit controlling.

Also the internet page www.credit-managers.de offers various information and reports about current topics, events and developments in the Verein für Credit Management e.V. and about the credit management in general.

InDiag, the **institute for company diagnosis** is a business institute of the economics faculty of the University of **Applied Sciences Bochum**. It was founded in mid 2003 and has its office in the University of Applied Sciences Bochum. Prof. Dr. Bernd Weiß, professor for financing and controlling decisively is responsible for the institute. Beside him 8 other professors from very different business disciplines integrate their know how in the institute. InDiag aims at pushing the application-oriented questions of the company diagnosis, particularly from the contentual perspective of the credit management and to practical communication. A close corporation between research, science and practice is realized.

So far 2 research works have been published within the empiric research which show a special contentual reference to the topic MRCM:

Factors of success of the debt realization in the corporate practice

– results of an empiric investigation –

This survey presents the results of an empiric investigation, which InDiag has conceived, implemented and analyzed in the name of the **Verein für Credit Management e.V.** In this investigation for the first time the debtors of suppliers' credits were questioned about their creditor management, their payment behaviour and their payment motivation. By means of this starting point the survey discovers success factors for the debt realization and gives clues for an optimized credit management.

By means of the empiric investigation InDiag could gain important insights for the credit management and could deduce rules of conduct for its efficient organization. The institute for company diagnosis has summarized the most important results of the survey to a working report of 30 pages, which may encourage thought and decision-making processes in the corporate practice and which may push the development of the credit management in German companies.

Credit management in the corporate practice

– Commented results of an empiric investigation concerning the organization, method and efficiency of the credit management –

This survey contains results of an empiric investigation which InDiag has conceived, implemented and analyzed in the name of the **Verein für Credit Management**. Altogether, 2.700 companies from all over Germany have been addressed. The participants were questioned about the organization and the processes of the credit management in their companies what helped to gain essential and practical knowledge about the area of responsibility and the resulting problems including their possible solutions. Based on the gained insights the survey shall encourage to analyze the situative facts and shall contribute to the further development and optimization of the credit management.

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Your service partner for security and quality

The TÜV Rheinland accompanies, develops, supports, checks and certifies. We support you to meet the requirements of competition today and in future. 130 years of experience, 300 locations worldwide and more than 1000 auditors in 60 countries of the world guarantee therefore.

Certified credit management

The TÜV Rheinland offers a certification procedure for the credit management. Beside the internal benefit, like e.g. improved internal financing, higher liquidity a systematic credit management implicates, also aspects in the external presentation are interesting.

Advantages of a certification

- Independent evidence of an adequate credit management towards internal and external interest groups
- Possibilities of benchmarking with other companies
- External perspective on the implementation and application of the credit management
- Discovering of optimization potentials
- To clarify the meaning of the credit management in the company
- Motivation for the staff
- Cachet for companies and service providers

The certification contains:

- Checking of documents
- Auditing of the credit management, possibly at different locations
- Certification (3 years validity)
- Observation audits in the 2nd and 3rd year, respectively
- Licence fees of the VfCM



The direct way to certification

The auditing and certification through the TÜV Rheinland is subdivided into several phases:

Commissioning

The TÜV Rheinland submits an offer to your company for the auditing and certification of the credit management. The costs for the auditing and certification depend on the size and complexity of your company as well as on the area of credit management, on the number of debtors and on the question of central resp. local credit management processes. Our offer describes the certification procedure, the sequence as well as the general requirements.

Optional pre-audit

On demand our experts initially carry out a pre-audit. This optional pre-audit supports you to check the credit management process for the general certification ability and to determine possible deviations, resp. improvement potentials.

Checking of documents

In the next phase of the certification procedure the auditors carry out a document check. By means of this check the general procedures in the credit management can be comprehended and an initial conformity consideration to the minimum requirements can be conducted.

Certification

In the certification audit we check the application of the described credit management process in the company. Our experts determine to which extent the process actually is introduced and comprehended and implemented by the staff. In case of a positive estimation the procedure is forwarded to the certification authority. Here the formal check is carried out and the certification is expressed.

With the first step you are already on the right way to your comprehensive credit management.

We are looking forward to the contact.



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51105 Köln

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Mail tuvcert@de.tuv.com

ZERTIFIKAT

Geprüftes Credit Management ID-Nummer: 0000000001



Die TÜV Rheinland Industrie Service GmbH bescheinigt die Prüfung des Credit Managements der



Muster GmbH
Test AG
Beispielplatz 2
10199 Berlin

Der Nachweis wurde erbracht durch Auditierung des Credit Managements und der zentralen Steuerungsprozesse.

Als Grundlage der Prüfung dienen die Dokumentationen sowie die Nachweise zur Einführung und Anwendung. Darüber hinaus wurden die Mindestanforderungen an das Credit Management (MaCM) des Verein für Credit Management VfCM bei der Prüfung herangezogen.

Zur Sicherung der Qualität der Prozesse des Credit Managements werden regelmäßige Überwachungs- und interne Qualitätssicherungsmaßnahmen durchgeführt.

Dieses Zertifikat ist gültig bis 28.09.2009
Zertifikat Nr. 9190928
Köln, 15.11.2006

TÜV Rheinland Zertifizierungsstelle
Am Grauen Stein
51105 Köln

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Fax 0221-806-1529

TÜV Rheinland Cert GmbH
Herr Wolfgang Rempe
Tel. 0221-806-3318
rempe@de.tuv.com

Zur Kalkulation des Aufwands für die Zertifizierung des Credit Managements in Ihrem Unternehmen benötigen wir einige Informationen. Bitte füllen Sie dazu das kurze Formular aus und senden es vorzugsweise per Fax an die oben angegebene Adresse.

Anschritt des Unternehmens			
Ansprechpartner für das Angebot			
Mail			
Telefon/Fax			
Ansprechpartner für CM		s.o. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Mail			
Telefon/Fax			
Anzahl der Standorte		Firmenstempel und Unterschrift	
Anzahl der Mitarbeiter			
Anzahl der Abteilungen mit CM-Aufgaben			
Anzahl der Mitarbeiter mit CM-Aufgaben			
Umsatz			
Anzahl der Debitoren			
Forderungsvolumen p.a.			
Zentrales CM	Ja	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dezentrales CM	Ja	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Standorte	national/international		
Softwarelösung			
MaCM konformes CM	Ja	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dokumentiert	Ja	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eingeführt seit			
Zertifizierung geplant für			
Zertifizierte Managementsysteme	<input type="checkbox"/> ISO 9000	<input type="checkbox"/> ISO 14000	<input type="checkbox"/> andere

