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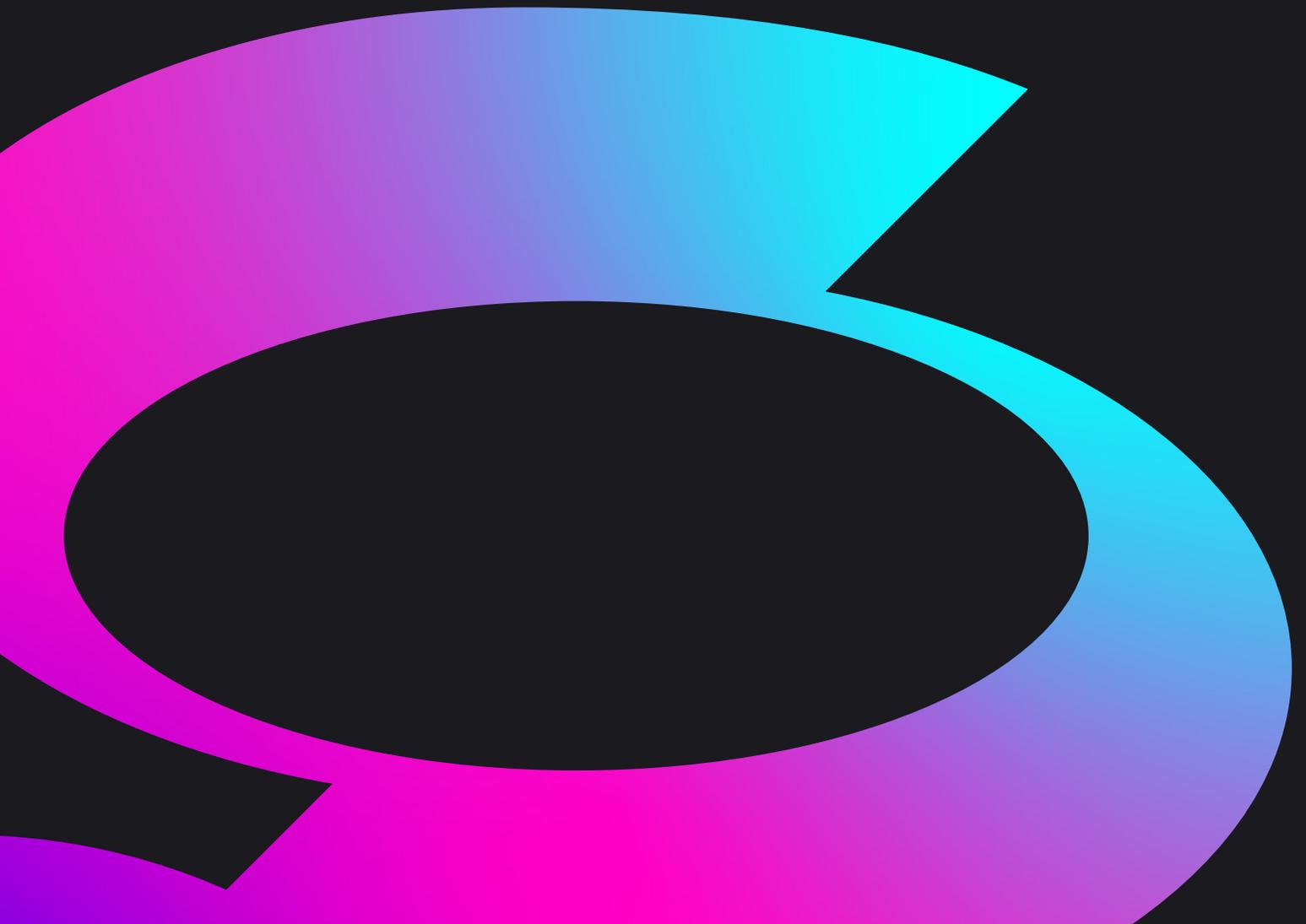
How to get C-level approval for your quality management system (QMS) project

Executive summary

This asset provides a step-by-step framework to help you build a compelling business case for your next quality management system (QMS) initiative and secure lasting executive sponsorship.

Too many QMS projects stall because they fail to resonate with leadership. Only 50% receive C-suite attention, and of those that do, 70% still fail.

The solution is to align your initiative with company goals, reframe quality in business terms and forecast clear financial outcomes with the help of finance and crossdepartment allies. When companies connect their QMS projects directly to strategic priorities, they not only secure executive approval, they also see success rates climb to 59%. Those that implement automated QMS systems report ROI as high as 330% over three years.

By following the process of aligning goals, gathering the right data, reframing your quality initiative in financial terms and testing with finance, you can position your QMS initiative as a persuasive business case that resonates with leadership. We recommend using these steps as your playbook to win approval, accelerate implementation and realize measurable business impact.

Introduction

Without the right prep work, you might as well flip a coin to see whether or not your next quality management system (QMS) project will take off.

That's because only 50 percent of projects receive C-suite attention. Even when they do, 70% of them fail.

That stat alone might make you question whether your next quality initiative is worth the effort, but here's some good news. When those in charge of QMS projects align their goals to company goals and strategy, they not only gain C-suite buy-in and get approved, they also succeed 59% of the time.

What's more, organizations that have driven these changes through an automated QMS have seen payback in less than 6 months and long-term ROI as high as 330% over three years.

The challenge, then, isn't implementing a QMS that delivers values. It's turning the initiative into a message that resonates with the C-suite.

What follows is a process you can use to create a message that speaks directly to the C-suite and other decisions makers and help deliver a QMS project pitch that secures approval and sponsorship.

1. Align before you model

Many QMS projects fail because they don't align with the company's broader strategies and goals. These could include cost reduction, compliance, revenue, growth and risk mitigation.

And, while ROI is important, it's not always the first calculation you should make. It might not even be a calculation you need to make.

For example, a medical device manufacturer we worked with positioned its QMS investment around faster regulatory approval since that was directly tied to faster revenue recognition. Their project secured immediate attention from leadership.

Looking at your company's goals will help you better understand how to translate your QMS project into a c-level message.

Checklist:

- Confirm strategic goals with senior leaders

- Define which business outcomes matter most

- Ensure your case aligns with company priorities

2. Collect the right data

Once you know or reacquaint yourself with your company's goals, it's time to grab the right data. Gather financial data on scrap, rework, warranty claims, compliance, customer complaints and more. Internal audits and reports already reviewed by finance or operations are a great place to start.

If you have historical data from previous initiatives, incorporate them as appropriate. It's also good to sprinkle in some third-party data that's tied to your plans.

Use this vetted data to show how your initiatives will help increase revenue, decrease costs and deliver on any other company goal.

Checklist:

- Identify relevant cost categories (scrap, compliance, delays)

- Collect historical data validated by finance

- Document assumptions clearly for later review

3. Reframe quality in business terms

You know the goals. You have the data. All that's left to do is translate quality initiatives into a strong c-level message that's aligned with your company's goals. For example, if your company is looking to protect margins and reduce risk, you might reframe nonconformance reduction as margin protection and reducing audit findings as regulatory risk mitigation.

If you've never done this before or you're not sure the best way to align quality initiatives to your goals, reach out to someone on your finance team. They can help you find the right terms.

Alternatively, you can also reach out to us. We love partnering with people to help them develop pitches.

Checklist:

- Replace technical terms with financial/business terms

- Frame improvements in terms of margin, revenue, risk

- Align every claim with executive priorities

4. Forecast ROI, revenue and savings

With your goals aligned and data in hand, it's time to show how your initiative pays off. As we said before, this doesn't always mean ROI, although it doesn't hurt to calculate it anyway.

Include both hard costs (e.g. revenue, operations, cost reduction) and soft costs for this part (e.g. hours saved) in your forecast. Spend some extra time forecasting soft costs since they don't always have an immediate impact on revenue and savings. Sometimes, their benefits show up on the financial report in years two or three. (For example, time-savings in year one might save you from needing to hire more people in year two.)

A long-term forecast helps leadership see the value they can save down the road. (And a good QMS should deliver ROI each year.) If possible, project at least three to five years to account for this.

This resource from Hobson contains real-world averages for revenue increases, cost savings and other benefits from implementing a QMS.

Checklist:

- Translate quality metrics into business outcomes

- Use recognized financial analysis methods

- Include both soft (time savings) and hard (scrap reduction)

5. Stress test with finance

Finance is your best friend, so bring them as early and often as you can. By sharing early drafts of your model, you'll gain credibility and avoid last-minute pushbacks. Finance leaders can validate assumptions, refine your calculations and flag risks you may not see.

More importantly, they can also become valuable partners during the process and join you in the push for a quality initiative.

One global manufacturer we worked with secured CFO sponsorship by building their ROI model side-by-side with finance. When it was time for approval, leadership already trusted the numbers, so they quickly greenlit a new QMS.

Checklist:

- Involve finance in early drafts

- Validate assumptions and inputs

- Address risk and sensitivity scenarios

6. Conduct meetings and build support

Surprises can sink proposals. Before the big presentation, set up one-on-one discussions with key stakeholders. These casual check-ins help you uncover objections, refine your case and gain allies across departments.

Consider pitching your message to people outside your typical channels, such as those in sales, marketing, design, human resources, customer support and more. People in these departments spend a lot of their time crafting messaging for potential customers and employees. They can provide you with a fresh perspective on your quality pitch since they (most likely) don't know it and give you pointers on smoothing out any rough spots.

Plus, it never hurts to have some friends who know a thing or two about making messaging spark and design shine.

Checklist:

- Schedule informal discussions with key decision-makers

- Note concerns and refine your approach

- Build a network of internal advocates

7. Finalize and present

When it's time to present, keep it simple. Outline the problem, quantify the impact and connect everything to your company's goals.

Be as prepared as you can to answer any questions that might arise but remember it's okay if you don't have all the answers. No one does.

Close with potential next steps and ownership if you can. You might not have every little detail finalized for your initial presentation (especially if it's a pitch), but you should be as prepared as you can be to take the next steps if/when your plan's approved.

Checklist:

- Structure the case with problem, solution, impact

- Define roles for tracking process

- Provide a roadmap for implementation

Conclusion

Building a compelling business case is no small feat. For those in the quality space, it often means aligning with company goals, gathering quality data and using financial framing that resonates with executives. We've worked with hundreds of customers to help them turn quality initiatives into revenue growth, cost savings and long-term ROI.

We're also happy to be your first partner on this journey. From ROI calculators to experienced guidance, we'll work alongside you to quantify benefits, refine assumptions and strengthen your case. Together, you can build a persuasive business case for a QMS that secures executive sponsorship and drives lasting impact.

Learn more about how to get C-level support for a QMS.

Contact us

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