WHITE PAPER

8 best practices for first time QMS buyers



Quality is about much more than the end product. It involves your employees, supply chain, and the industry standards your organization must meet. Automating each aspect of the quality management process comes with several benefits, including simplifying employee training, detecting issues with suppliers, and making compliance easy for all those involved.

Technology can help you accomplish all this and more. However, if you decide to automate your quality program, you likely have some questions about buying quality management software if you are purchasing it for the first time. Let's go through some things you'll need to know.



Why automate?

There's consistent pressure to stay competitive while improving quality, but this can soon get expensive and complicated if you're relying on outdated methods for measuring your work. A QMS (quality management system) streamlines all the moving parts of the quality puzzle, allowing you to:

- Reduce the cost of poor quality
- Deliver higher quality products and services
- Analyze the quality management process to innovate and improve
- Create a centralized hub of documentation to aid in compliance and increase efficiency
- Monitor trends predict opportunities and roadblocks
- Reduce time completing repetitive tasks to increase employee productivity
- Better prepare for internal and external audits

The benefits of quality management software for organizations of all sizes are many but simply understanding the benefits of the software and actually achieving world class quality are quite different. Here are some questions we often receive:

Can I afford this?

The real question is — can you afford not to have an automated QMS? Whether it's because of increasingly strict compliance requirements, ineffective technology systems, lack of training, or outdated quality management practices, poor quality costs the average company $49 million annually. That's a significant loss. Still, the good news is that the average ROI for quality investments is around 23%, according to a recent survey of our customers. There are a wide range of QMS software systems available but it's important to guard against investing in a system that provides only limited functionality, or one that cannot scale and adapt as your business grows and evolves. The initial purchase price of any software will pale in comparison to the cost to "rip and replace" and re-implement new software 18 months after you bought your first.

Why can't I keep using Sharepoint?

Simply put, SharePoint is not a QMS. While it works up to a point, you've already outgrown it. A dedicated QMS gives you more configuration options and allows you to scale your processes, workflows, quality events, and, ultimately, your business.

That's key in a post-pandemic world where we've all seen the need for flexibility and the ability to adapt to changing situations quickly. SharePoint, Excel, and similar systems don't offer this, and while that might work for some businesses, those that want to grow and improve need to embrace the power of a dedicated QMS.

Donna McCracken
FUJIFILM
Manufacturing,
U.S.A., Inc

"Reliance has been a smashing success for our end-users at Fujifilm. We continue to load new users and their documents daily, and they love it."

What is a QMS going to do for me?

look deeper into the workings of an automated QMS and what that means for you. The opportunities are endless with a flexible system, but here are some highlights:

- Empower employees and managers to increase quality
- Centralize all documents, workflows, and processes
- Simplify quality management across the business
- Reduce the need for hard copies of documents
- Less grunt work is needed to update documents and enter data
- Advanced analytics that give enterprise-wise visibility
- Flexibility to add new ways of working as needed

A wide variety of businesses use a QMS, and with an adaptable system, it's easy to create something that works for your business, rather than the other way round.

Implementation best practices

The thought of implementing something that automates your quality management might seem daunting, but it's much easier than you might think. Setting up the software is straightforward, and, with Octave Reliance (formerly ETQ Reliance), you'll receive support from our team to make sure everything goes smoothly. Here are some tips for getting started:

Set clear goals

Spend time considering where you want to be and how an automated QMS might support those goals. Ask yourself:

- How do you want the system to work?
- What departments should use it and how?
- What documents and processes do you want to manage through the QMS?

Take time to think about all these objectives, as this can help you set a clear implementation plan.

Define requirements

Once you have the broader goals, it's worth thinking about your specific requirements. Start simple and consider these elements:

- Document control
- Training
- Audits
- Corrective actions

These are all excellent places to start; additional functionality can always come later. However, consider how you want the QMS to integrate with other business systems and ways to include suppliers in the process.

Communicate the benefits

It's essential to get buy-in for any new system. Think about what's necessary to the team, whether you're looking to bring senior managers on board or communicate how great the new system is to employees in order to encourage adoption. For example, a QMS can:

- Reduce the risk of non-compliance
- Streamline operations
- Reduce costs
- Grow product revenue
- Allow workers to spend time on more value-added projects

Prepare for implementation

Once you understand your goals and requirements, it's time to put a plan into place. A phased approach works well here. That allows you to get the basics in place and achieve some quick wins before going onto the more complex aspects of the implementation process. For example, you might start with the out-of-the-box offering, using this to make improvements while your teams adjust to the new software. From there, you can look at how to enhance that offering by adding more configurable elements and integrations that make the system even more powerful.

As you prepare for implementation, you should also define your project steering team. That'll include people within your organization as well as people from your QMS partner's team. These people help keep the project on track and moving forward.

Take steps to ensure ongoing success

Take steps to ensure the implementation of your QMS is a success. Here are some tips:

- Create your change management strategy
- Identify how you'll measure your goals and requirements
- Engage and motivate the entire team
- Provide relevant training opportunities for all staff
- Leverage the resources of your QMS partner

Stay up-to-date

If the software requires updates or adds additional functionality, regular cloud-based software updates are simple to manage and execute by the software vendor, not you. This automation removes the need for brand new software every 18 months and future-proofs your QMS environment.

Add new applications when you're ready

You'll also get access to 40+ applications with Reliance to support you in risk management, supply chain quality, health and safety, environmental management, and more. This access means you can bring everything into one centralized system, making compliance, auditing, and analytics that much easier.

Community makes your life easier

It might seem like the fate of the business's quality rests on your shoulders, but with a QMS, you'll get access to experts and a community to help guide you as you make this switch. Octave's community is a friendly place to learn from your peers, find answers to your questions, and dive deeper into embracing the power of the QMS.

What value will I get from this investment?

We've already talked about reducing the cost of poor quality and the average ROI from quality management investments, but let's dig deeper into what this might mean for your business.

Cost vs. value

The amount you spend on something is the cost; it's that simple. Value, however, is often a little harder to quantify because calculations occur in several ways. The value of something is its total benefit to the business — a QMS's value might include reducing the cost of poor quality, increasing brand image (and, therefore, revenue), and lowering the cost of scrap, rework and warranty claims. All these things add up to the total value of a QMS for any company. There's also the added value of buying a comprehensive, flexible and scalable system that grows with your business and quality needs, rather than a limited solution that could create more data siloes than it resolves.

To understand the return on investment of a piece of software, think about its total value — from its cost savings to the areas where it can help increase profit. For example, recalls can be detrimental to any organization, but the overall cost of remediation can be curbed with an automated, cloud-based quality management system. With 73 percent of organizations report having experienced at least one recall in the last five years, and 48 percent saying there are more recalls now than there were five years ago, it's critical to implement ways to decrease the affect and frequency recalls will have on your organization[1].

Simplicity

Cost and value aside, there are considerable benefits to such a configurable and flexible system. A QMS is going to simplify your life and increase productivity within the business. Quality management has many moving parts, and when this spreads across different systems, it's challenging to keep everything (and everyone) up-to-date. By moving to an automated QMS, you free up everyone's time to focus on the more pressing tasks — the ones that directly affect the business's bottom line. Because the system is flexible, you can set it up in a way that suits your business. The configurability of Reliance allowed Kimberly-Clark, for example, to customize the platform to meet its needs better. The company created a new module called "Contract Management" that contains every form, workflow, and view it needs to manage its supplier contracts.

Analytics capabilities

Audits are a normal part of quality and compliance, but they can seem challenging if you don't have the correct systems in place. An intelligent QMS with analytics capabilities can make audits a breeze. The software ensures you have all the correct information to complete the audit and review your current processes. These same capabilities can also help you identify areas for improvement and opportunities within the business.

Finding a QMS that works for you and your businesses is all about understanding your own needs and what's possible. Look for a flexible solution that fits your quality processes — not the other way around. The right system helps streamline the audit process, makes training employees more straightforward, and provides you with the tools you need to improve quality and increase profits.

[1] The Pulse of Quality in Manufacturing Survey Report. 2025.

FAQ

What are the benefits of QMS software?

The benefits of QMS software include:

- Deeper insight into the business as a whole
- The ability to reduce the cost of poor quality
- Simplified employee hiring and training
- Document control to aid in compliance
- Analytics to support the audit process

How does QMS software work?

A QMS works by centralizing quality management across the business. It's a dedicated place for important documents, processes, and workflows. It helps to manage the complexities of the quality process based on industry specifications and customer needs.

What makes a good QMS?

A good QMS is flexible and allows you to tailor it to your needs while adding intelligent automation and reporting capabilities to simplify the quality management process. Doing this creates more consistency across the business, which leads to improved quality.

What is a quality management system example?

Reliance is an example of a quality management system. It allows you to centralize quality, risk management, health and safety, environmental management, and more across one cloud-based system.

About Octave

Octave is a leader in enterprise software, turning data into decisive action and intelligence into your edge. Our software solves for and simplifies complexity, from the design and build to operations and protection of people, property and assets – for any scope, at any scale. For decades, we've partnered with customers to sharpen performance, elevate efficiency, and amplify results. From factory floors to entire cities, our solutions are tuned to scale up what's possible from day one onward.

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