WHITE PAPER

Octave Reliance vs. SharePoint: One is a QMS and one isn't





Many companies try to use SharePoint as a quality management system (QMS). And it works, up to a point. SharePoint falls apart when you need to scale it with the fast pace of manufacturing, hiring and regulatory compliance.

When you outgrow SharePoint, consider it a good sign. If SharePoint no longer delivers the information you need in terms of processes, workflows and quality events, it means your company succeeded in other areas. Trying to force SharePoint to work for you can result in diminishing returns, however.

Evolving from spreadsheets to SharePoint

Here at Octave, we see SharePoint as the culmination of efforts to develop an adhoc QMS in-house. Processes are recorded with pen and paper, pen and paper records get turned into spreadsheets and spreadsheets finally upload into SharePoint document libraries.

That is one of the first significant issues when using SharePoint as a QMS — its constituents create a shaky foundation. We have a white paper about why you should move away from using spreadsheets as a QMS, but here are some highlights:



Spreadsheets contain errors.
Roughly nine out of ten enterprise spreadsheets contain errors affecting their results. In a quality setting, this could cause you to fail audits or ship products with production errors.



Are we supposed to be using that?
Spreadsheets have no inherent version control mechanisms, so it's hard to tell if you're using an approved document or one that's still under-baked. That can create gaps in training and processes.



Hard to search.
Where was that file again? Spreadsheets have a habit of straying into employees' email inboxes and personal computers, never to be seen again. That causes people to spend lots of unproductive time looking for information.

Using SharePoint can fix the last problem — at the very least, it creates a searchable and centralized repository where people can look at all their Excel files. That allows homebrew QMS systems to scale for at least a little while. SharePoint cannot solve the version-control and error control problems with spreadsheets, however — and it can't provide other features allowing advanced QMS users to respond proactively to quality issues.

Where does SharePoint fall short in terms of quality?

The next step up from using paper and spreadsheets is to take all your spreadsheets and move them into SharePoint. In addition, you might start asking your personnel to create all future files as record types in SharePoint itself. These may include controlled documents, libraries, forms, procedures, policies, and more. SharePoint can also capture corrective actions, external audits and regulatory actions.

To summarize, we can create nearly every kind of quality record or document as its own library within SharePoint. This feature is beneficial for an organization, but problems arise when users want to try something more advanced.

One problem is, when you can create all of your quality documents as SharePoint records, it becomes difficult to pull individual records to ensure best practices are being met. If users aren't filling in every field or if they're doing so using insufficient information, then record quality could degrade before you notice.

That is a flat system. It's not impossible to drill into SharePoint records and find all the files related to a single audit, but it's challenging and time-consuming because we store those files next to all the other audit files. It's even more difficult to, for example, check the timestamps on when the audit files were created to understand how long it took the audit to be resolved. In other words, if you want to answer some useful questions, such as "how long does it take for us to perform an audit and are we improving over time," it's going to take a considerable amount of work to acquire a small amount of useful data.

Because SharePoint makes it challenging to collect granular data in a short time, this frustrates many analytics possibilities. That means important events, such as decreased supplier quality or increases in customer complaints, could theoretically happen right under your nose. By the time you dig out this information, the consequences may already have been felt as lost sales or damaged reputations.

In short, SharePoint can store quality records, but it doesn't allow you to perform detailed analytics in real-time or perform the kind of process optimization that could help you center quality as a strategic initiative in your organization.

SharePoint and Reliance — The best of both worlds?



By contrast, alongside SharePoint, Octave Reliance (formerly ETQ Reliance) provides the kind of analytics that quality needs — and its deep library of integrations allows you to keep using SharePoint for day-to-day operations.

Octave Reliance represents a feature-complete, cloud-native QMS solution based on a high-performance, future-proof platform. With the accompanying Octave Insights application, users can quickly ingest quality data and output reports and visualizations that spotlight trends involving audits, nonconformances, customer complaints, supplier quality and more. With its accessible and digestible interface — plus hours of educational content in our knowledgebase — Reliance puts detailed quality insights at your fingertips.

The best news — especially for those of you who are (or work with) SharePoint hardliners — is that Reliance and SharePoint can work in tandem. Our next article discusses how you can integrate SharePoint with Reliance, ensuring you can keep using SharePoint as a frontend for frontline quality workers.

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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