

Quality Management Software

A Buyer's Guide for
Modern Quality Teams





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Overview

In an ever-more connected world, quality teams don't have the visibility they need. Pen and paper evaluations transferred to spreadsheets have been the norm for decades. But sparse, disconnected data doesn't cut it anymore.

Forward-thinking companies are investing in quality management system software, or quality management software (QMS), to meet the challenges of complex, modern businesses. While there are multiple tools in the quality management sphere, many of them will not be the right fit for you. Whether they have limited functionality, are built to better serve another industry, or lack the clear organization you need, these tools do little to help you improve on a more thorough approach to quality.

You need a platform that has evolved to understand what quality teams need in a modern world, and one that continues to create the tools that will carry you into the future of quality auditing.

This buyer's guide:

- Defines quality management software
- Outlines the benefits of a good quality management platform
- Helps you understand when it's time to invest in a QMS
- Summarizes who should be involved in the procurement process and how to narrow the field of vendors
- Details how to evaluate the vendors you've shortlisted

What Is Quality Management Software?

If you're reading this guide, you likely have a good grasp on the basics of quality management software. However, the field has evolved very quickly in recent years, expanding to include new features and responsibilities are factors you may want to consider as you evaluate vendors. Think carefully about the role your team can play in this expanded future of quality management.

1. Goals for a QMS

The overarching reason to implement quality management software is to help your company more effectively implement your quality goals. Those will be as unique as your brand, but common goals include:

- Consistent application of brand standards
- Reduce risk with reinforcement of proper safety procedures
- Set benchmarks that create amazing customer experiences
- Ensure suppliers and other vendors meet expectations
- Improve efficiency of your quality system
- Gather, get visibility into, and make sense of data from across the company
- Prepare for and pass standards certifications
- Document processes and procedures

In essence, a QMS helps you implement processes that improve brand experience, reduce risk, more efficiently gather data on quality from around your company and suppliers, and understand that data better.

2. Features to Look For

Features will vary somewhat across quality management software vendors, depending on what industries they serve or the depth of the product. Your decision will hinge on whether you're looking for just the baseline features or whether you're developing a more comprehensive quality model that requires a platform that can grow with you. These are the key features in a more comprehensive quality management platform.

- Broad auditing capabilities, including offline auditing
- Comprehensive reporting capabilities, including incorporation of external data sources
- Role-based reporting to ensure the right stakeholders get the information they need
- Easy-to-use team communication features
- Clearly documented processes and quick corrective action when needed
- Centralized data storage
- Supplier onboarding and quality management

Free Download

Download our cheat sheet of questions you need to answer and what questions your vendors need to answer before you invest in a QMS.

When Do You Need a QMS?

When it's become too painful not to have one. Outgrowing more manual methods of quality management creates a number of issues that will hinder your company's growth, either by not having the information you need to make solid decisions or by exposing you to unnecessary risk. So what kind of issues are you seeing (or looking to avoid) that can be ameliorated with quality management software?



6 Signs You Need a QMS

1. Current Quality Systems Aren't Fast Enough
2. You Feel Overwhelmed with Data
3. Reporting is a Nightmare
4. Your Job is More Admin than Action
5. Strategy Feels Aspirational
6. Supplier Inconsistencies or Miscommunication Are Becoming an Issue

1. Current Quality Systems Aren't Fast Enough

Pen, paper, and spreadsheets just don't cut it for you anymore. This system might have been feasible when your company was smaller or had fewer locations, but now it takes too long to do audits, inspections, and continuous monitoring the old-fashioned way.

Not only do employees have to ensure they have the right forms, a working printer, and a few hours to transcribe the results, but also you aren't getting information quickly enough to act on it. A QMS will bring those processes into the digital age, making all checklists or audits available in real-time as soon as they're completed.

2. You Feel Overwhelmed by Data

Is the information you need buried in a long-lost email chain? Are you unsure of trends or risk factors across your company? Is data being collected but not used? Managing data is a growing concern for most companies, and if you don't have the information you collect going into a single database, it's no wonder you feel lost. Quality management software will help you collect information more efficiently and make it easier to parse.

3. Reporting is a Nightmare

You don't need to spend hours copying information into spreadsheets and fiddling with charts and graphs. If you've ever wondered why other people are so hyped on reports as you define the Y axis in Excel, it's time to get QMS. A robust platform will not only help you bring your data together, but it will also make sense of it with relevant pre-built reports and easy-to-use custom reporting tools. Then you can instantly share those reports with anyone who needs to see them.

4. Your Job is More Admin than Action

The administrative side of every job is a necessary one, but it's all too easy to let it take more time than it should. A QMS will free up much of that time with clearly communicated brand standards, automated reports, tasks and alerts that eliminate email back-and-forth. Take admin off your plate and get back into the things that matter.

5. Strategy Feels Aspirational

Speaking of things that matter... Proactive strategy is the first thing to get put on the backburner when work gets busy, but you'll ultimately feel the effects of a reactive strategy in ways that will take a long time to put right. However, quality management software will both free up your time to focus on things that matter and help you get organized around priorities and goals. It's a double win.

6. Supplier Inconsistencies or Miscommunication Are Becoming an Issue

Missteps by a supplier will damage your brand reputation just as fast as a misstep by your team. Food safety issues, labor violations, supply chain problems, inconsistent quality, and more can all come from your suppliers and damage your brand that took decades to build.

A more comprehensive QMS may include supplier quality management to help you vet, onboard, communicate with, and monitor your suppliers to ensure they meet your brand standards and help you deliver a quality customer experience.

Getting the Team Together

Software procurement is an important process. It's an investment in your business and requires sign off from stakeholders around the company. The team involved in vetting, giving input on, and ultimately approving a new technology may include people from quality, IT, finance, product management, partner management, legal, and more.

With so many potential people involved, how do you keep the team as streamlined as possible while still considering everyone who needs a say?

It helps to think of the decision in terms of who needs to be involved and who simply needs to be considered.

Internal Stakeholders

First look to who, within your company, has a stake in this decision. If they need to approve, manage, or use the quality management software, they need to be involved in the procurement process. If they will be indirectly affected by but not directly using the QMS, take their needs and involvement into consideration, but they do not need to be involved in key steps of the process.

INVOLVED



Company Leadership

This will vary depending on the roles and responsibilities in your company, but it could be the CEO, CFO, VP of operations, CTO, or some combination of those areas of influence.



Direct Manager

Whoever is managing the quality department, and, by extension, the quality management software, must have a say in whether the chosen platform has the functionality and usability needed.



Internal Customers

While these people will differ depending on your organization's structure, this would involve anyone who relies on quality team to do their jobs well. You want to ensure anyone who is directly affected by your choice of QMS gives input.



Resource Manager

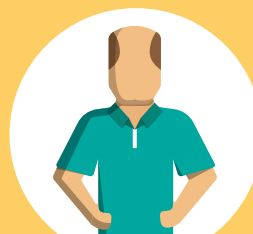
Likely an IT director or similar, this person will be working hand-in-hand with your chosen QMS to implement properly and ensure seamless operation.

CONSIDERED



Project Team

The team implementing this project and ensuring it goes according to deadline and expectations is important, but they do not need a say in which platform is chosen. However, you should consider their bandwidth and capabilities when discussing implementation and rollout.



Company Peers

Look to those who are at a similar level of the direct manager. They will often have valuable insight or be indirectly affected by your choice.

Getting the Team Together Cont.

External Stakeholders

Next, look at who outside your company will be affected by your choice. These are not people or organizations that you would talk to about your decision, rather it's thinking about how outside relationships will benefit from your selection. Understanding the needs of external stakeholders is a major part of working toward your desired outcomes when adopting quality management software.

CONSIDERED



Governing & Standards Bodies

Does this platform integrate with any certifying bodies you work with? Will it help ensure you meet standards and regulations? These are key points to consider.



Suppliers, Vendors & Contractors

Think about your current supplier quality needs. If you're often onboarding new vendors or struggle to communicate with them, look for a platform with capabilities that will facilitate better relationships.



External Customers

Your customer experience should always be top of mind. Think about whether the QMS you select will drive the mission of mitigating risk and delivering quality for your customers.



Getting Down to Your Quality Management Software Shortlist

If you've ever gone to Google looking for a company to solve a specific problem before, you know the power of search engines as well as the main problem. While your search results will almost certainly turn up quality prospects, weeding through the duds, or those who just have great search engine optimization (SEO), is frustrating and time consuming.. Luckily, there are software review sites now available to help you narrow the field when looking for the QMS best suited to your needs. Here are a few of the most popular:

[g2.com](https://www.g2.com)

[getapp.com](https://www.getapp.com)

[capterra.com](https://www.capterra.com)

[softwareadvice.com](https://www.softwareadvice.com)

[trustradius.com](https://www.trustradius.com)

While they have the same basic concept – list and review different types of software – each has a different layout or design, so you can use whichever you find easiest to navigate. In addition to offering user reviews, some of the sites allow you to check which features you are looking for and compare across companies.

Your initial list of QMS vendors should include everyone who meets your basic feature requirements. You want to cast a wide net to avoid missing the one that will be right for you. Then you can narrow it down to your top 3-5 companies by considering a few things that set great QMS vendors apart from the pack.

1. Do they have simple usability?

Front-line employees will be the ones using this product day in and day out. Your quality management software must be accessible to those who will be working in the product every day. No matter how powerful the software, if it's incomprehensible to all but a few admins, you won't get the widespread user adoption needed to achieve your goals.

2. Can they give you in-depth training?

Does your vendor have a team of internal experts who can provide in-depth training to your team? Sometimes this training is built into your implementation costs, or it may be additional cost. No matter the structure, if you don't invest in thorough product training you need, your investment in the software may be wasted.

3. Will you get up-to-date visibility?

One of the key goals of quality management software is getting better visibility into your brand. Make sure you aren't simply getting a high-tech version of your previous manual quality model. If your software doesn't give you up-to-date visibility, it is not the right QMS for a forward-looking quality system.

4. Does it provide multi-layered reporting?

There is little point in taking your quality management process digital without enjoying hassle-free reporting. However, you should also look at the depth of reporting capabilities in your QMS choices. Your quality model will evolve over time, and so will your reporting needs. For intelligent, flexible reporting, look for customizable, permission-based reports that you can view at local, regional, and corporate levels.

5. Will you have a detailed trend analysis?

No one can predict the future, but with enough data gathering and analysis, you can get pretty close. Many quality teams talk about acting proactively instead of reactively; with an accurate trend analysis, that goal can be a reality.

Detailed Walkthrough to Evaluate & Choose Quality Management Software

You have all the tools to understand generally when it's time to start looking for quality management software and where to begin. However, you still need to be able to narrow those choices down to your final selection. This step-by-step process will walk you through what questions you need to answer and what questions your vendors need to answer before you sign the contract.

1. Understand Your Needs

If you don't have a good idea of why you're looking for in a QMS, you will rarely be happy with the vendor you choose. The vendor selection process should begin with a clear-eyed view of your needs. These practical questions will help you better understand what you are looking for in quality management software.

What gaps do I need to fill with quality management software? What do I need to accomplish? Think back to when the idea of a QMS was raised. What was the catalyst for that conversation? Some of the most common issues include lack of visibility, company growth that makes manual processes impractical, and difficulty making sense of the data. Whatever the answer, this is the foundation of every other decision.

What's my budget? Knowing what you can afford is key to any purchase. While you may want all the bells and whistles, if you can only afford the bells, that can still be a good place to start and begin proving the value of your new quality processes. Also keep in mind that many enterprise software companies have negotiable pricing. Adding more locations or users, paying part of the fee upfront, or using more or less of the product are all common ways to negotiate pricing.

Who on my team will administer the system? Will they need extra training or help? There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer – this will depend on the people you have and the vendor you choose. Admins who are more tech savvy or have used your chosen solution will need less training, but it also creates more organizational risk when everything is funneled through one person. Consider if vendor training is available to multiple people on your team, so you don't have to rely on a single product expert.

"You may want all the bells and whistles, but with a flexible QMS, you can start with the bells and get the whistles as you grow."

Will the software also be used by other departments?

If so, make sure that you have a representative from each department involved in the selection process.

What does my internal approval process for final purchase look like?

Identify who in the company must ultimately sign off on the deal. Ensure you know who needs to be kept in the loop, and what they need to feel comfortable with the final decision.

Is an RFP required? If it is, do you already have a template to use or can you save time by adapting one used by another department?



2. Understand the Vendors

Once you have a good understanding of your needs and selection process, it's time to get into the nitty gritty with your shortlist of vendors. Do as much research as you can online, get a demo (probably more than one from each of your top picks), and ask more questions than you think you need to.

These questions fall into a few buckets covering what exactly the product can do, how you can use it, how it will protect your data, and who they are as a company.

Product Usability

Why is your software better than what I'm doing now? If the vendor can't articulate a clear value proposition, they likely don't have one. You want a partner with a clear understanding of the industry, what problems they can solve for you, and why they're better than the status quo and their competitors.

Is the software easy to adopt and use for frontline workers, suppliers, admins, and auditors? User adoption will be low if the software has a complicated user interface. Even admins, who should understand the product inside and out, benefit from having multiple product experts on the team, so they don't become bottlenecks when large changes are needed.

Will my team need training in order to upload existing data into the software? Some companies offer data transfer as an add-on service, but if you don't want to pay for it or the service isn't offered, you'll need to know how difficult it is to import your data.

What kind of training will my team need in order to administer and use the software? This depends on how user friendly the software is and how robust its capabilities are. Find out what typical training looks like, what the time commitment is, and whether additional onsite training is available if needed. Remember that solution investment without training investment can make your new software useless.

Can I easily find the data or metrics I need to make my business run more smoothly? If employees don't know how to enter the data and managers can't pull information from the system, you are wasting time and money. Be sure to have the vendor show you in a live demo environment how reporting works.

Free Cheat Sheet

Get our free download of "Questions to Ask Yourself & Vendors before You Buy Quality Management Software"

Flexibility

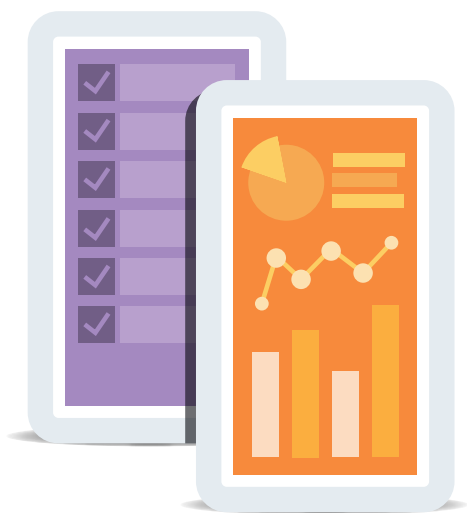
What solutions are available through the software? In more enterprise-level quality management software vendors, you will typically have more than auditing available. Consider every piece of the platform and how useful it will be to meet your goals. If you can meet multiple goals using the same software, you will save time and money versus using separate systems.

Can I transfer my existing quality system into the software? You may have a quality model already vetted and working well but in need of a digital upgrade. If that's the case, describe your system in detail and find out whether the vendor's forms, hierarchies, and other tools will accommodate the system you have developed.

Does the software integrate with other software I use? If it doesn't, decide how important that is. For example, integrating your marketing database with your QMS may not be a priority for you, but connecting it to your human resource management software may be a must. If your top pick doesn't integrate with something you'd like it to, ask how difficult or expensive adding an integration is. The vendor may be able to add it for you at minimal cost.

Will I be able to transfer data in and out of the software, or will I need outside help? Some platforms make data import and export a chore, while it's a breeze for others. Find out what each vendor does so you can plan accordingly.

Are there different user permissions so I can protect sensitive information? Your quality management system will be housing a great deal of important brand data, but it doesn't need to be accessible to everyone using the system. Make sure your vendor has user permissions that allow only certain people or roles to view specific reports or tools.



Will the software support my goals and future growth plans? If you are looking for your first QMS, make sure you're looking for systems that have capabilities you can grow into. You don't want to be in the middle of building a better quality model and find that you need to implement a system with more features in two years.

Security

How is my data stored and backed up? Does the vendor have a documented data protection plan? Can you receive all your data upon request? What policies are in place in case of catastrophic events?

What security measures are in place? What type of encryption is used? Is your data ever shared with partners and under what circumstances? How and when would you be notified in case of a data breach?

What does my IT team need to know or do if we implement this software? What type of ongoing maintenance may be required? Does the software have recommended devices that must be purchased? Will they have access to support if needed?

Company

How long have you been in business? Make sure you know they have a good track record in your industry and with delivering quality software to customers.

What is the vision and growth plan for your software?

Ask for their "roadmap." Not only will that help you evaluate if their vision is strong and headed in the direction your company is going, but it will also tell you if they're not putting as much thought into the software's future as they should.

Can I see some customer reviews, references, and case studies?

If you'd check reviews on a pair of \$50 shoes, why wouldn't you do the same for software that costs tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars? Don't be afraid to look at review sites, ask to speak to current customers, and see case studies.

Will I have a single point of contact within the company for my support needs?

Understand how you will communicate with and get support from the QMS company. Is it a single project manager or customer success manager? While it's normal for users to call into a support team after implementation is complete, your admins should have a single point of contact to discuss major issues or product upgrades.

How often can I expect software upgrades and versioning?

While you want the product to evolve and grow with your company, you should also see how often users will be expected to make updates and potentially learn new processes if the user interface changes.

How fast is implementation? Should I expect downtime?

Implementation can vary with the company, as well as with how robust your quality model is. However, the company should have implemented enough clients to give you an accurate estimate of when you should be able to start using the product. This is particularly important if you have company goals to hit and need to begin implementation by a certain date.

3. Review Fit Between Business Needs & Software Capabilities

Once you have answers to all the questions, it's a simple matter of making a grid with your needs and wants and going through your top vendors to see whether they meet each one. This may seem tedious but will make the review process much simpler.

While you can weight things such as personality fits between your teams or gut feeling, try to stick more to the facts. You never know when your favorite project manager may leave the vendor, or whether a charismatic salesperson made you overlook a poor product walkthrough.

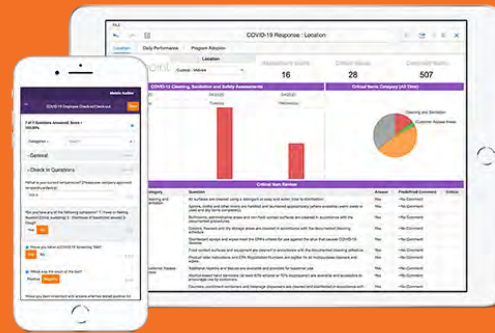
Don't forget to include the positive reviews or referrals as their own category, and weight them more heavily if they are a business similar to yours.

4. Purchase

Congrats! You made it through and now it's time to buy! Your legal team will need to go through the contract, and possibly make changes. Once legal has given the go-ahead to your top pick, you can let the vendors you didn't choose know that you are moving forward with another company. You aren't obligated to tell them who you chose or why, but you can if you'd like to help them improve. Then it's all down to gathering all the right signatures and celebrating a job well done.

Conclusion

With the right quality management software company for your team, you can begin to implement changes to your quality system that your brand needs to thrive and stand out. It's not easy to take the vast field of quality management software vendors and narrow it down to the right choice for your company, but we hope this guide has helped you identify the vendor that will bolster your success and help you grow.



About RizePoint

We help companies keep their brand promises. Our quality management software empowers quality teams to understand what's going on, make data-based decisions, and drive improvement.

When you choose RizePoint you get:

- A sense of order and clarity in your quality management system
- A customer support team that has your back
- Less guesswork and more confident decisions
- More ability to focus on what's most important

Our offerings include:

- A world-class auditing app that saves auditors' time
- Built-in analytics to help spot trends and hotspots
- Reporting dashboards specific to your business and goals
- Document and data storage to create a single source of truth
- Built-in corrective action tools for faster resolution

How to Get in Touch

info@rizepoint.com
888.313.7095
www.rizepoint.com



 rizepoint®

rizepoint.com | 888.313.7095