

An effective quality management system (QMS) provides the means to consistently meet consumer expectations and deliver products and services with minimal waste. In today's highly competitive global economy, having a QMS in place is the prerequisite for sustainable success.

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS)

In the simplest terms, a quality management system is a clearly defined set of processes and responsibilities that makes your business run how it's supposed to. Each organization tailors its own QMS, comprising a **formal set of policies, processes and procedures** established to elevate consumer satisfaction. A QMS guides organizations as they standardize and enhance quality controls across manufacturing, service delivery and other key business processes.

The core benefits of a QMS include:

- Elevated consistency and standardization of processes and outputs
- Reduced errors and increased operational efficiency
- Improved customer satisfaction through the delivery of quality products and services
- Continuous evaluation and improvement of organizational operations

## Digital QMS

A QMS can be delivered digitally rather than using paper checklists and forms. This saves organizations time, mitigates risk and minimizes the chance of human error. Implementing a digital QMS requires meticulous planning and execution, and needs to be designed to comply with relevant regulations and industry standards, incorporating robust digital security measures to protect data. All of these approaches call for expert guidance.

### *Types of quality management systems*

A QMS may be based on either domestic or international standards. Different QMSs respond to different needs and scenarios, and organizations can choose to implement just one, or integrate a blend of different approaches. Among the most common are:

- **Standardized systems:** These set the bar for established standards and agreed-upon codes and practices, such as certifications against ISO standards. ISO 9001 outlines requirements for a comprehensive QMS and provides guidance for organizations looking to implement or improve their quality management strategy.
- **Total quality management (TQM):** TQM is a management philosophy centred on customer satisfaction through the active participation of every employee. Its goal is to support the continuous improvement of quality across all levels and business functions.
- **Lean management:** Inefficiencies can result in unnecessary waste. Lean management strives to maximize customer value while minimizing waste using tools like value stream mapping, which helps fine-tune an organization's processes for optimum efficiency.

- **Six Sigma:** Although perfection is almost impossible to reach, the pursuit of it is still worthwhile. Six Sigma uses data-driven techniques in the pursuit of producing near-perfect products and services, with a defect rate of 3.4 per one million opportunities. While that's not perfect, it is pretty close.

### ***Benefits of QMS***

There are numerous reasons to establish a QMS. Standardized processes improve efficiency and enhance productivity through the reduction, or even elimination, of redundancies and waste. Defect prevention reduces costs associated with reworking or scrapping.

QMS audits excel at recognizing potential problems before they occur, thereby significantly reducing risk. What's more, a QMS streamlines the record-keeping process, with improved documentation facilitating **traceability** and **accountability** – and aiding in **regulatory compliance**. A QMS also functions as a troubleshooting process, providing performance metrics and built-in audits to uncover weaknesses, establishing a solid foundation for improvement.

Consistent quality leads to **happy, satisfied customers** who become informal brand ambassadors within their communities. So, they create further business opportunities and the potential for increased market share. Any real-world example of a QMS will aptly demonstrate this: Companies who have built a successful quality system are more likely to achieve their business goals, driving higher-loyalty, frictionless customer journeys.

Additional benefits encompass:

- Demonstrating a commitment to delivering reliable outcomes
- Establishing a unified direction for the organization
- Cutting operational costs
- Minimizing waste
- Streamlining and enhancing processes
- Reducing errors
- Boosting employee engagement
- Highlighting and supporting staff training needs

### ***Why is a quality management system important?***

Every organization wants to strive for excellence. Because, ultimately, the quality of a product or service is what the customer gets out of it and is willing to pay for. Quality management plays a crucial role in delivering a superior experience, which in turn influences a company's growth and performance.

Here are six good reasons to consider investing in a quality management system:

- **Brand reputation:** This is priceless, of course. A brand is more likely to gain international recognition when an organization surpasses established quality benchmarks.
- **Customer retention:** Consistently meeting, or exceeding, customer needs and expectations fosters loyalty. When high standards are met or surpassed, why would customers go anywhere else?
- **Business sustainability:** Consistently delivering excellence ensures and maintains a steady supply of customers. Doing business sustainably, and producing minimal waste, is the best way to grow and future-proof an organization.
- **Compliance:** Meeting regulatory, safety and quality standards is a must and a QMS seamlessly facilitates this process.
- **Competitive edge:** Higher-quality products and services give businesses a competitive advantage in complex times.
- **Staff engagement:** Employees who feel they are involved in quality improvements tend to experience higher engagement and productivity.

Developing an effective quality management system doesn't happen overnight, but requires careful planning and execution. So, what are some of the key steps to success for an organization starting out on its QMS journey?

- **Secure leadership commitment:** Building a QMS requires alignment at the executive level.
- **Document processes:** Identify and thoroughly document procedures associated with existing quality processes.
- **Define metrics:** Performance-tracking metrics should be determined to ensure they meet QMS requirements.
- **Training:** All employees will need initial and ongoing training in order to build understanding and engagement with the QMS.
- **Audits:** Regular self-audits on processes and procedures will ensure compliance and effective implementation.
- **Review system performance:** Regularly assess system performance in order to make improvements as needed.

It's important to note that while the steps outlined above provide a high-level overview, building and sustaining an impactful QMS takes considerable effort and commitment across multiple areas of an organization.

- ISO 9001:2015 Quality management systems — Requirements