Integrating ERP with QMS Solutions for Cost-Effective Quality Management

Ideagen

Executive Summary

ERP solutions offer tremendous potential for integrating and improving business processes, but also represent a substantial investment on the part of the organisation.

Beyond the initial implementation of an ERP solution, organisations often encounter issues in integrating and merging additional processes that include:

- spiralling costs
- increased disruption
- widening gaps in business-critical processes

This white paper considers how organisations can successfully integrate and merge additional processes such as quality management with an ERP solution by implementing quality management system (QMS) solutions to improve:

- document management
- CA/PA management
- audit management

Introduction

In gaining a significant advantage over competitors, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution delivers an impressive array of tools to integrate and continuously improve business processes throughout the organisation.

This power is not without its price, however, and the implementation of an ERP solution is often looked upon as a daunting prospect; and with good reason: for many organisations, an ERP solution is often the biggest, most costly, and most complex project on which they will embark.

An ERP solution – especially in enterprise-level organisations – therefore represents a considerable investment on the part of the organisation, not only in terms of financial cost, but also in man-hours and workload:

- planning the project
- installing, configuring and deploying the solution
- training staff on the solution
- supporting the solution

Still further resource is required in order to retain staff buy-in and senior management commitment. This is vital for an organisation in overcoming the business and cultural challenges that they face in successfully integrating processes in all areas and at all levels of the organisation.

But having calculated the total cost of ownership of an ERP solution, many organisations feel under pressure to use it to manage every business system in order to justify its expense. And when a hammer is the only tool to hand, everything can begin to look like a nail.

Integrating ERP with QMS Solutions

Beyond its initial implementation, in integrating and merging additional processes such as quality management, an ERP solution can offer extra functionality – often at considerable extra expense.

However, an ERP solution is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and can lack critical functionality in being able to coordinate the day-to-day activities vital to maintaining and improving the QMS.

In extending an ERP solution to include additional processes, all too often organisations face the same risks that threatened its initial implementation.

Spiralling cost, ongoing disruption, widening process gaps: all threaten to destroy the competitive advantage painstakingly built up by integrating and improving processes with an ERP solution.

But by integrating such a solution with a QMS solution, organisations can put a system in place that is developed from quality principles, and which provides extensive quality management functionality, without the pain of additional disruption and further outlay.

What is an integrated QMS solution?

An integrated QMS solution provides organisations with a flexible framework to maintain and improve QMS processes, and enables them to extend and develop QMS processes in all areas and at all levels, either as a separate system, or as an integrated component of an existing ERP solution.

By integrating with other information systems such as ERP, manufacturing resource planning (MRP) and customer relationship management (CRM), an integrated QMS solution can support a variety of processes throughout the organisation.

From documenting and distributing policies and procedures, to identifying opportunities for continuous improvement, an integrated QMS solution enables not only a systematic approach to managing quality, but also ensures a comprehensive viewpoint of the QMS status throughout the organisation.

With an integrated QMS solution that enables the efficient and effective management of quality, organisations can:

- improve document management
- improve corrective and preventive action (CA/PA) management
- improve audit management

By integrating with other solutions, QMS solutions allow staff to capture all quality-relevant information at the point of need, through the system that they're most familiar with, as well as making key management system information available to users of other applications.

How can an integrated QMS solution help to improve document management?

Even where an ERP solution claims to manage controlled documentation, very often the functionality falls short of requirements, e.g. linking to files shared on a network, rather than in an encrypted database that provides appropriate document security and controlled user access.

With an integrated solution that incorporates a comprehensive document management system, organisations can ensure that:

- documents can be stored in a centralised system
- point-of-need access can be provided to ensure their availability
- security of controlled documentation can be safeguarded

How can an integrated QMS solution help to improve CA/PA management?

At the core of a QMS is its ability to manage non-conformances, and with a QMS solution designed upon quality management principles, organisations can put a solution in place that has been specifically developed to support quality processes that include CA/PA management.

With an integrated QMS solution, non-conformances can be dealt with using a system specifically designed to manage them:

- critical business data can be captured
- action can be taken at the point of need to correct and prevent recurring issues
- opportunities for improvement can be identified

How can an integrated QMS solution help to improve audit management?

From internal and external audits of an organisation and its suppliers, to third-party audits by customers and regulators, organisations are continually audited. Vital to the success of an integrated solution is putting processes in place to monitor and measure the effectiveness of controls.

Where controls have been implemented to ensure that the quality of products and services can be maintained, the systems that verify their effectiveness must be continually improved, to ensure that evaluation programmes continue to be effective and that quality can continue to be assured.

How can an integrated QMS solution help to implement a framework for quality management?

Q-Pulse from Ideagen is an integrated QMS solution which provides organisations with an interconnected framework that supports a systematic and comprehensive approach to QMS management.

By integrating quality management and enterprise resource planning systems with Q-Pulse, organisations can achieve a systematic approach to managing quality, and at the same time achieve a comprehensive viewpoint of their QMS status in all areas and at all levels of the organisation.

From documenting and distributing policies and procedures to identifying opportunities for continuous improvement, Q-Pulse increases the visibility and control of information systems to secure greater buy-in from stakeholders and to achieve greater transparency of quality-related information.

The Q-Pulse Integrated Management Framework

Based on the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycle, the Q-Pulse Integrated Management Framework comprises 7 simple steps:

1. Define and document

Define and document the scope of your system, policies and procedures, all with appropriate Document Control.

By providing secure, centralised access to the policies and procedures that support your information systems, your business can ensure that all management and staff can be aware of and acknowledge their responsibilities in integrating and continuously improving business processes throughout the enterprise.

And by automating the control and visibility of changes to documentation throughout the enterprise, you can motivate all management and staff to participate in the change management process in order to ensure that business and cultural challenges can be successfully overcome in integrating processes.

2. Publish and distribute

Publish and distribute your management system to all appropriate personnel, via secure web access, including supply chain.

By extending and developing QMS processes to management and staff throughout the enterprise, your business can establish and implement policies and procedures which can contribute to the continual improvement of safety and quality by developing and encouraging adherence to best practices.

And with the real time status of system performance available on demand, you can significantly increase the visibility and control of information systems, in order to secure greater buy-in from management and staff as well as to build greater commitment, motivation and participation from senior management.

3. Train and develop staff

Create a framework to demonstrate staff competence and capability and therefore train and develop staff.

With a robust and flexible framework to maintain and improve the training of staff, your business can validate staff competence regularly to ensure that management and staff understand their role in supporting information systems and in contributing to its understanding of day-to-day operations.

And by identifying those impacted by changes to documentation, you can schedule relevant procedure-based training to ensure that all management and staff has the expertise and experience required in order to achieve greater agility in responding to changes in processes throughout the enterprise.
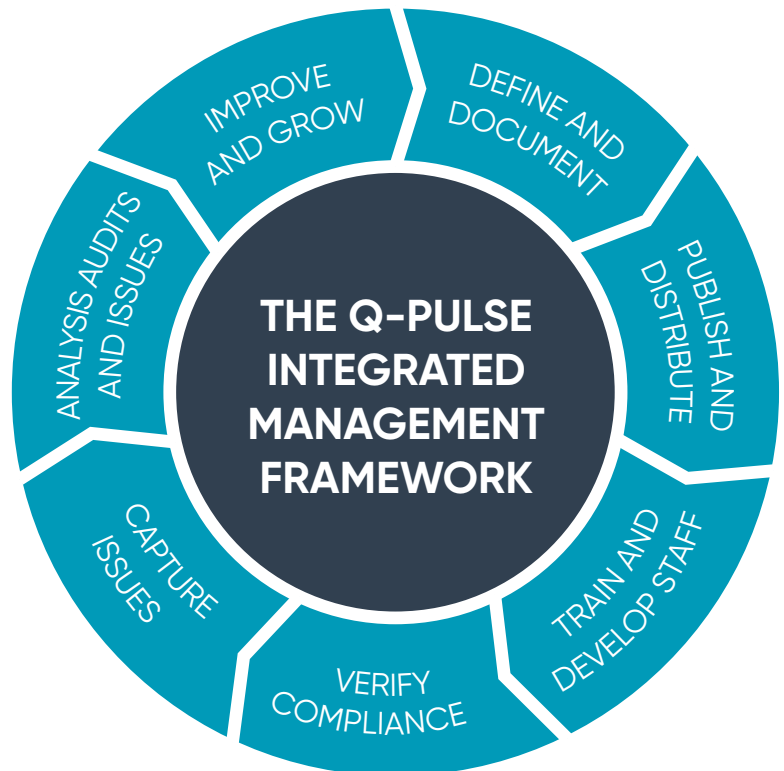
4. Verify compliance

Verify compliance of your policies and procedures through regular internal audit and prove/demonstrate adherence to legislation.

By integrating all audit programmes within a systematic, holistic framework, your business can track and continuously monitor all QMS information across the enterprise to reduce audit cycle times, to drive down compliance costs, and to deliver assurance over the business' key risks.

And by centrally managing all external, internal and third-party audits, you can increase the availability of information related to business process change, in order to break down organisational silos, to coordinate efforts to prevent their formation, and to reduce the exposure to risk associated with information systems.

5. Capture issues, NCs and complaints

Capture issues, NCs and complaints, create action plans and track through to completion all within one single, integrated system.

By extending its reporting system throughout the enterprise, your business can ensure that all management and staff can report quality-related issues, non-conformances and complaints through a streamlined and standardised framework that improves subsequent investigation and analysis.

And by centrally managing all corrective action plans, you can automatically notify all stakeholders and participants of upcoming and overdue quality-related actions in order to ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements, to accelerate time to completion and prevent recurrence.

6. Analyse audits and issues

Analyse audits and issues, incidents, occurrences and audit findings and determine the root cause with detailed graphical analysis.

By analysing all QMS information across the enterprise, your business can identify root causes and trends to ensure that quality-related policies and procedures meet and exceed legal and regulatory requirements through regular internal and external evaluation.

And by putting key performance indicators in place for systems-related activities and actions, your business can monitor and measure real time system performance across the enterprise, to identify performance gaps and trends, reduce operating costs and drive improvements in performance.

7. Improve and grow

Improve and grow by identifying trends and concerns, highlighting costly repeat issues and implementing improvement projects.

By achieving greater visibility and control of QMS information, your business can ensure that its systems can be integrated successfully and that management and staff can contribute to a shared understanding of its operations, in order to reduce business risk and take advantage of growth opportunities.

And by continuously improving the systems that verify the effectiveness of controls, your business can achieve greater integration throughout the enterprise to ensure that evaluation programmes continue to be effective, that quality can be assured, and that competitive advantage can be sustained.

Contact us now at info@ideagen.com to find out how you can effectively establish quality management throughout your organisation with Q-Pulse.

Book a consultation

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