BPA Solutions

Microsoft 365

The QMS dilemma: buy off-the-shelf or build in-house?

Make the right choice for the next chapter of your business

Agility is crucial

A make or buy decision for a software solution needs to be taken after defining a detailed specification document about your QMS needs today and in the future. Your quality team should contribute to defining these specifications, not your IT. Since it's complicated to anticipate future needs, the ideal solution should be agile enough to adapt to your company growth – which is hard to find, but not impossible!

User Experience is the foundation

User experience (UX) is key for a software solution to be efficient, whether it's bought or developed in-house. A UX mockup is highly recommended, especially when developing your own solution - which is unfortunately rarely the case. Keep in mind that the best features won't make a great product if users are not using it. Several prospects came back to us after 18-24 months of failed attempt to develop or implement an in-house solution for quality management because of poor user experience – SharePoint alone cannot be considered as a QMS.

Not a one-off project

Additionally, to ensure your software is cardinal for all Quality Management tasks, you need to guarantee that it is technologically relevant and performing correctly. If your QMS is based on SharePoint, you need to make sure that it is fully aligned with all updates frequently pushed by Microsoft. If not, your in-house built platform may not perform as it should, hence discouraging users from using it as often as they should. Not an easy task to accomplish when IT resources are limited. Building a QMS software is not a one-off project but a constantly evolving one requiring continuous efforts and highly tech-/quality-savvy assets.

Key aspects to consider before going ahead

In today's competitive and highly regulated world, a QMS software has become as important as an ERP and CRM software, and it makes little sense to redevelop such complex solutions in-house, unless you are a software development company. Which key aspects should you keep in mind?

Many are obvious, however additional variables that need consideration are often set aside:

Obvious selection criteria

- Total project cost (not just software licenses)
- Data security (cloud vs on-premises)
- Time to develop/implement
- User experience
- Technology (proprietary vs standard)
- Product features

- Agility and autonomy (can the software be easily adapted by a power user)
- Needed user and power user training
- Compliance with regulations (to avoid costly fines and be able to access new markets)

Additional aspects to consider

- Required business/it expertise and experience when developing a software inhouse and the ability to update software on the long term and support users
- Support of regional language and local settings
- Target all audiences (from back-office, to frontline and field users)
- Mobility and offline access
- Engagement with external stakeholders (suppliers, clients, auditors)

- Collaboration and instant messaging
- Robust automation
- Connectivity to external systems
- Multi-site deployment
- Reporting and bi
- Integration of advanced generative ai
- Content import and export
- Data sovereignty (what happens once contract with solution provider is revoked)

In a nutshell

Here is a quick table encapsulating the pros and cons of buying BPA QMS software versus developing your own QMS software in-house.

	Buy BPA QMS	Build in-house
DEVELOPMENT	**PROS** Out of the box, no development needed. **CONS** Software license cost (no license needed to populate the eQMS with MS Forms).	**PROS** No license cost. **CONS** Development cost, hiring cost, required technical/business expertise, cost of needed hardware/software. Risk of failing to develop a solution that works and is adapted to the company's needs (developing software is a profession).
Obsolescence	**PROS** Software maintenance, support and continuous updates included in license. No additional maintenance cost. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Cost to continuously maintain software and support users. High risk of obsolescence (maintaining software requires continuous effort).
Speed of implementation	**PROS** Quick go-live, software is ready-to-use, swift power user training. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Lengthy development, deployment and training.
Configurability and ownership	**PROS** Power user autonomy to configure the software, highly configurable. **CONS** Less control over development. However, BPA includes all needed critical QMS functions and feature requests can be made.	**PROS** Client has full control over development. **CONS** Power users have limited or no control over the configuration of the software. User needs & requirements not met

	Buy BPA QMS	**Build in-house**
UX	**PROS** Proven great user experience (BPA components & M365 technologies). **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** User experience is often less considered and might compromise the success of the project.
Functionality and compliance	**PROS** All modules are included to comply with regulations (ISO, FDA...), open doors to new markets and improve trust with clients. Additional modules can be swiftly activated when needed. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Functionalities to be developed from scratch with limited automation. Risks related to non-compliance with regulations.
Efficiency	**PROS** Proven success in increasing efficiency, reducing cost of non-quality, increasing productivity and performance, 200+ successful client projects. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Risk related to a new project starting from scratch, limited experience in similar projects.
Scalability	**PROS** Preconfigured automated workflows included in subscription, ready to be implemented, save time on automated tasks. Quick multi-site deployment. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Cost to develop/maintain automated workflows. Cost to extend functionalities to additional sites.

	Buy BPA QMS	Build in-house
IT risk	**PROS** Standard M365 technology with no IT risk, robust security and data availability, good connectivity with external systems, improved collaboration and teamwork. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Risks related to proprietary technologies, poor data security and availability, cost of data breach, cost to interface with external systems.
Accessibility	**PROS** Easy access by all audiences (desktop, Power Apps, offline access). **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Additional development cost for mobile/offline solutions.
GenAI integration	**PROS** Generative AI ready to be included on demand, to minimize manual work. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Cost to develop/maintain/train GenAI solutions.
Data sovereignty	**PROS** Data belongs to the client, who has full control over it. **CONS** -	**PROS** - **CONS** Risks related to data control.

Navigate your quality journey with confidence, powered by BPA Solutions

Connect with our Quality experts to see firsthand how BPA Solutions can help you achieve excellence.

Contact us if you wish to embark on an efficient compliance journey!