When your organization is thinking about implementing a quality model, where do you start? Contact a consultant? Research models? If so, which consultant do you choose -- and which model? It can seem daunting, we know. But, don't give up! We have some tips for choosing a quality model that’s right for you, setting you on a path for success.

**Identify a Business Objective**

The first step in initiating a quality management initiative is to identify the business objective. To do this, answer the questions:

- Why do we want a quality management system?
- What do we hope to get out of implementing a quality management system?

Once you understand the “why” of quality management, you can then start to look at the “what.” For example, if the answer to the above set of questions is, "I want to improve my testing capabilities," then consider implementing the TMMi model. But, if your company goal is to improve your engineering principles, then the CMMI model is for you.

If you don’t understand your goal, you can’t figure out the best path to get there. So, take some time to set a goal and then determine which model works for you.

- **TMMi**: A model to improve the quality of your testing through the implementation of processes based on best practices in software quality management.
- **CMMI**: A model to improve the quality of your products through the use of best practices in development, acquisitions or services.

**Identify the Key Roles for Success**

There are two key roles in any quality management system, the sponsor and the champions.

- **Sponsor**: The sponsor is responsible for providing the leadership and funds for implementation and for overall maintenance of the quality initiative.
- **Champions**: The champions are those within the organization that possess some level of authority to implement change.

Identify your sponsor and your champions and make sure that they understand their responsibilities for implementation.

One of the biggest misconceptions is when an organization thinks that a quality model implementation is a “side-job,” something to pass off onto those people who have nothing better to do. This is one of the largest points of failure for an organization, assuming that implementation won’t be a time intensive or priority task and then assigning the wrong resources to the project.
Often, junior resources with limited knowledge of operations and little-to-no authority are assigned to write the quality model processes. Keep in mind that quality initiatives are about so much more than writing processes; they require changing organizational behavior, developing implementation plans based on the corporate culture, and having the ability to effectively communicate with all levels of the organization. It’s necessary to understand the breadth of the implementation and to assign appropriate resources who can handle the full set of responsibilities and who understand the organization on a broad level.

**Additional Considerations**

**Hybrid Model**

While many organizations implement quality models to achieve a maturity level rating, others are purely looking for ways to improve particular areas within the organization. If you are not looking for a maturity rating or a certification, consider implementing a hybrid version of models. In other words, take areas of various models, which when implemented are going to improve that particular area of pain for your organization. Forget about implementing a full model if you only need a portion. The purpose of implementing any quality model should be to provide value to the organization. Implementing process for the sake of having a process will lead to further problems, like people not following the processes.

**Training**

Provide the team with the skills and knowledge needed for success by providing the appropriate training. Most model training is offered at an introductory level and is not enough information to thoroughly complete the project. It is enough information for the team to be dangerous, not successful. Consider providing intermediate training, which will cover the ins-and-outs of the model. Most intermediate level training includes the relationship between process areas and identifies the expectations of implementation.

**Consultants**

Consider hiring a professional – this advice should not be overlooked, especially if you intend to be appraised for a rating or certification. Often organizations feel that because they sent a few people through training, they are capable of implementing the processes needed to achieve their goal. Model language cannot always be interpreted literally and often requires an expert for appropriate translation and implementation.

It is necessary to understand why the model is asking you to do something in order to fully address that area. Often organizations write processes that duplicate model language. The intent is not to rewrite the model; the intent is to describe how your organization intends to meet the definition of what the model is describing. Don’t wait to hire a professional until after you’ve spent thousands of dollars and years working to implement processes, only to find out you are not making any progress toward your goal.

**Conclusion**

In summary, quality management should provide value to the organization; therefore, the organization should implement processes that make sense for its culture. Select the right model for the right purpose and ask for help with interpretation and implementation – it will save you from frustrated resources and overspent budgets.