

# TOP 10 GAP ASSESSMENT BEST PRACTICES

## For implementing a Management System

Are you planning your first Management System Gap Assessment or conducting a follow-up? Based on SPAN's experience implementing dozens of management systems, we have created a list of Top 10 Gap Assessment Best Practices to make sure you get the maximum value out of your assessment.

### 1. Clearly define your goal for the gap assessment

Your end goal is to implement a management system. So, your gap assessment goal is to gather enough information to develop a good implementation or improvement plan. A common mis-step is to go into too much detail or try to design solutions during the assessment – that can come later during implementation.

### 2. Engage and train your Leadership Team

The gap assessment is an excellent time to educate your leaders on the Management System and the value it can bring. Conduct a training and awareness workshop with your Leadership Team before the gap assessment, focusing on what the future state will look like, what it will achieve for the company, and how the gap assessment will give Leaders a prioritized, scheduled and budgeted plan to get to implementation.

### 3. Build ownership with key managers and technical personnel

Once implementation starts, you will rely heavily on key managers and technical personnel to sustain your Management System for the long term. So now is the time to get them involved and owning their subject matter areas during the gap assessment. These people are typically your busiest and best experts in the organization, and they won't want the extra work! Once they know the value of the effort, and what future state looks like for them, they will jump on board and will be integral in the implementation journey.

### 4. Plan your gap assessment carefully

First impressions count. The gap assessment may be first time many people in your organization hear about Management Systems, and they will be skeptical. If your gap assessment is well planned and well communicated, it will go a long way to building credibility as well as trust and commitment in your program. Communicate to all participants early and often. Focus on scheduling and logistics that make it as easy as possible for people to participate and see value.

*Send us an email or give us a call for more information on gap assessments and implementing Management System*

## 5. Don't go too deep for the first assessment

Your first gap assessment does not need to go into every requirement and detail of a management system. Assess at the 30,000' level, identifying programs and processes that meet overall requirements. You can assess in more detail at a later date as part of implementation. If more detail is needed for your plan, dig a little deeper in specific topic areas but not too much; you do not want to overwhelm your organization. Keep it simple, build momentum, and use future phases to root out more details.

## 6. Assess "how" you will implement

A major failing of most gap assessments is they typically focus on the "what" - technical requirements - and forget to assess "how" you will implement. It is important to identify the things you need for a successful implementation. Consider guidance questions that assess implementation requirements for project management, MS expertise, organizational change management, communications and other needs.

## 7. Be consistent when interviewing and writing results

Develop a standard assessment protocol that allows you to conduct interviews, assess maturity and write gaps in a consistent and objective manner, singling out deficiencies in systems and processes, not groups or people. Being disciplined in how you conduct and report the assessment increases the likelihood of leadership buy-in and credibility when it comes time to present the implementation plan and request the necessary resources.

## 8. It's OK to identify lots of gaps

This is your opportunity to identify everything that you need for a successful implementation. Don't be afraid to capture lots of gaps at this stage, like brainstorming, and then prioritize and collate them when building the implementation plan. Consider a gap database tool that will help you organize and analyze these gaps after the assessment is complete and carry them forward through implementation.

## 9. Prioritize your implementation plan with Leadership and assign actions

Work with leadership to prioritize and group gaps into an implementation plan and a set of actions. Determine the right sequence, develop timelines and estimate financial and personnel requirements. Obtain leadership approval and necessary budgets for implementation.

## 10. Start implementing right away!

Momentum is everything. Often, a gap assessment is completed and then all activity stops. Implementing the results of the gap assessment immediately reinforces the importance of and commitment to having a Management System. This will show the organization that this is real and their participation counts. Focus on quick wins and initiatives that engage leadership and key personnel, so they see value as soon as possible.