



How Schellman applied
its own audit rigor to build
a quality management
system with QMCORE



From policy to system

Before QMCORE, Schellman's quality management infrastructure was solid. The firm had well-developed internal policies, robust engagement-level controls, and a culture of professional skepticism honed through years of assessing other organizations' management systems. But the connective tissue was largely manual: shared drives, document repositories, and spreadsheet-based tracking that required constant maintenance.

As a firm built around specialized attestation and cybersecurity assessment services, Schellman's quality management activities span a range of technical disciplines, each with distinct risk profiles, control expectations, and regulatory touchpoints. Disconnected tools were functional at smaller scale, but created friction: version control issues, gaps in ownership, and no durable record of what had been assessed, by whom, and when.

About the firm:



Schellman is a leading provider of attestation and compliance services, specializing in SOC examinations, ISO assessments, FedRAMP, and cybersecurity audits. The firm operates across multiple specialized practice lines, each with distinct risk profiles and regulatory requirements.

For leadership, the challenge was less about access to information and more about confidence in it. Assembling a coherent picture of quality management status required pulling from multiple sources, introducing lag and inconsistency. When SQMS 1 raised the bar by requiring a functioning, demonstrable system rather than simply a set of policies, it became clear Schellman's existing approach would need to evolve.

Schellman's primary concern entering the SQMS 1 implementation was not organizational complexity in the traditional sense. The firm operates with clear lines of accountability, so the concern was precision. SQMS 1 demands that firms not only identify risks and responses, but document the linkages, demonstrate that controls are operating effectively, and maintain that evidence over time. Getting those relationships right, across components that genuinely intersect, required a level of structural discipline that is difficult to impose on unstructured tools.

There was also a unique dimension to Schellman's implementation: as SOC examiners and ISO assessors, the firm's team recognized immediately that they were building a management system with striking similarities to the thousands of management systems they assess on behalf of clients. That shared foundation provided both a natural frame of reference and a high bar for what good looks like.

Bryan Harper, a director at Schellman, noted that "SQMS 1 gave us the forcing function to close the gap and it made clear we needed structure, which is what QMCORE provided."

The firm designed its System of Quality Management by working through each component with the relevant functional owners, prioritizing where controls serve multiple risks and where accountability for a given objective crosses team boundaries. Cross-component mapping is where QMCORE added the most immediate value: the ability to link a single control to multiple risks across the system, without duplicating documentation or losing traceability, reflected how the firm actually operates.

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Vendor evaluation followed Schellman's own standards. The team reviewed QMCORE's SOC report as part of the vendor management process, and carefully considered what data would be stored in the platform versus linked externally. QMCORE's flexibility to accommodate a hybrid model rather than requiring full system-of-record status helped accelerate the vendor management process.

Ultimately, the decision to choose QMCORE came down to more than features. The guidance, responsiveness, and depth of expertise the QMCORE team brought to the process gave Schellman confidence that they were partnering with a team genuinely invested in their success.

Turning requirements into a functioning system

The capabilities that delivered the most value during implementation were the ones that reduced interpretive burden. Having SQMS 1 objectives embedded directly in the platform meant Schellman's team spent less time debating structure and more time on substance. The objective-risk-control linkage framework provided a consistent vocabulary across components and made it straightforward to demonstrate coverage without reconstructing logic from scratch at each review cycle.

Three areas where QMCORE provided the most tangible structure were monitoring activities, root cause analysis, and remediation tracking. Each is a requirement under SQMS 1 that is straightforward to describe in policy but difficult to execute consistently without a purpose-built system.

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Key takeaways that Schellman benefits from QMCORE

- **Peer-level scrutiny**

As SOC examiners and ISO assessors, Schellman applied the same rigor to QMCORE that they apply to client systems and it held up.

- **Cross-component traceability**

QMCORE's ability to link a single control to multiple risks across components reflected how Schellman actually operates, eliminating duplicated documentation.

- **End-to-end workflow**

Monitoring, root cause analysis, and remediation tracking each have a defined home in the platform, transforming policy into a functioning, auditable system.

- **Purpose-built partnership**

The QMCORE team's ongoing investment in webinars, guidance, and proactive updates on SQMS 1 developments made the relationship more than a software purchase.

QMCORE gives each of these a defined home. Monitoring activities are built and executed within the platform. Findings flow directly into root cause analysis. Remediation is tracked with clear ownership and status throughout. The platform's built-in alerts, configurations, and reminders also addressed a practical reality: maintaining compliance discipline over time requires more than good intentions. Automated prompts and structured workflows ensure that monitoring doesn't slip between cycles.

For non-traditional CPA firms with specialized services, non-audit practice lines, or a different client mix, Schellman's experience offers a relevant lesson. SQMS 1 was written with the traditional audit firm in mind, but QMCORE's flexibility allows firms to map to the standard in the way they actually operate, linking existing processes and information to the standard's core requirements rather than forcing the firm into an assumed shape.

To learn more about QMCORE, visit:

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