



The Kick-Ass QBR



Introduction

In this eBook, you will learn how to prepare for and run an effective Quarterly Business Review (QBR). Instead of running through the same old script and PowerPoint slides, you will learn how to engage your customer in forward-focused dialogue, make your champion look good in front of their boss, and uncover new opportunities during your QBR.



The Stakes:

If done correctly, QBRs can serve as a high-quality touchpoint to keep your customer engaged and successful. Unfortunately, a lot of account managers were taught a very old school way to run their QBRs. They are using big decks with 50 to 100 slides, they are heavily scripted when presenting, and they are focused on proving past value. Account Managers who use this approach are likely seen by their customers as a mere tactical supplier - just another vendor.

With this approach you are leaving money on the table and missing an opportunity to have good discussions with executive management. So, what are the red flags that your QBRs aren't providing good value for your customer?



Executives pop and in and out of your meeting.



Executives fail to show up to your QBRs all together.



There isn't active dialogue or engagement during your meeting.



Your customer isn't talking about future opportunities with you.



“I ask my vendors for 4 charts and they show up with 55 PowerPoint slides.”

“I’ve started delegating these meetings to my staff because they just aren’t important to me.”

“They haven’t done their homework. Their executives show up and ask the same questions every time.”

“The vendors just talk, they don’t ask questions or listen to what I need.”

QBRs From your Customer’s Perspective

Your biggest accounts with the most value likely have lots of vendors that they are communicating with. In our research, we found that a lot of clients dread their QBRs with their account managers. And if you as the account manager dread your QBRs, imagine how your customer feels after listening to 5+ in a given month. It’s no wonder senior executives will beg off and suddenly have “emergencies” and “crises” that need to be solved at the same time as your scheduled meetings.

So why all the dread? Your customers told us that their QBRs were “too long,” “irrelevant to my needs,” and “too tactical.”

Do you think any of your customers would say these things about your QBRs? Most account managers can probably understand where these customers are coming from. So how do we make a mundane, often rote, and most importantly **unhelpful** exercise valuable for you and your customer?



Changing Your Mental Model of a QBR

What we at Kapta have learned from working on both sides of the aisle, from your customer's side and the vendor's side, is that most QBRs are based on dysfunctional beliefs about QBRs like:



They need to be heavily scripted



They need to include a 45 -60-minute presentation



Our clients find them valuable



They have to be done on a 90-day basis



We need to show TONS of data

These models are wrong. They are outdated. Maybe they come from something our boss learned in the 1980s when he or she was out doing QBRs that are not relevant today. Our customers have different expectations about how we work with them and build a partnership with them.

Components of a Kick-Ass QBR



“The typical dysfunctional QBR begins with the account manager building out a deck with 50-100 slides which they go through with their customer one by one by one. I call this a ‘show up and throw up QBR’”

-Alex Raymond, Kapta CEO

1. Include Only a Short PowerPoint Presentation

The typical dysfunctional QBR begins with the account manager building out a deck with 50-100 slides which they go through with their customer one by one by one. Also included in this presentation are dysfunctional thoughts like, “I need to include a picture of our office buildings; I need to include a big product roadmap; I need to include pictures of the org chart and executive team.” All of this does is crowd out the message we want to deliver and take away from the meaningful conversation we want to have with our customers

No one likes to be talked at, and our customers are short on time and being pulled in a lot of directions. That’s why in the modern QBR we recommend that you send out your supporting data, a meeting summary, and your PowerPoint deck ahead of time so that your customer can quickly review the information before the meeting, thus cutting down on the time you need to present.

2. Your QBR Should be an Active Conversation with Your Customer

In the typical ‘show up and throw up QBR,’ there is little time for conversation. What a squandered opportunity! You have everyone in a room, the biggest decision-makers, your POC, and you spend the whole time talking at them about your office, and your roadmap, your executive team.

Having your customer success team, and their team together in the room is the perfect opportunity to clarify customer goals, their challenges, and what they need most from you. If you have cut down on your presentation, then there is an opportunity to have these meaningful discussions all together that will drive future opportunities and growth.



The big decision-makers are in the room. There is no better time or place to talk about these future goals, milestones for success, and to get commitments from both sides.

3. QBRs Should be Led by You and *Your Customer*

The typical QBR is a one-way conversation. But how do you make it more of an active conversation with your customer? Getting your sponsor/champion involved so they have some skin in the game is a great way to get them and their team engaged in that conversation. A lot of account managers gulp when they think about giving work to the customer, but remember the POC at your large accounts are on the hook for results too. They look good with the solution they are managing is successful and contributes to positive business outcomes.

When planning your QBR, aim to split the presentation 50/50 with your customer. Otherwise, you are taking on all the burden yourself, and as you may have already found, it's not that effective. The more your customer contributes to your QBR, the more invested they will be, and the more value they will get from the meeting. Your customer can help shape the agenda, contribute data, and co-present. Helping your customer feel involved and empowered for the QBR is part of the art and science of being a key account manager.

4. Your QBR Should Remain a Forward-looking Focus

One of the biggest mistakes account managers make in the field is viewing their QBRs as playing defense. They think they are just the lowly account manager who has to justify the existence of their solution. They view a QBR as something they just have to get through. This outlook makes us not very effective in the meeting and often keeps the dialogue focused on past performance. You and your company were hired to provide value and share your knowledge and expertise. You have earned a seat at the table to talk about the future and future opportunities together.

Come into the meeting prepared to share your expertise, big ideas, brainstorm, and generate discussion about the future. The conversation should mainly focus on where your partnership could be headed. Try incorporating forward-looking, open-ended, and strategic questions like, "how do we build on this," or "where do we go from here?"

Again, the big decision-makers are in the room. There is no better time or place to talk about these future goals, milestones for success, and to get commitments from both sides.



Executing a Kick-Ass QBR

Now that you understand what a QBR can be and the value they can bring, as well as the components of a successful QBR, how do you execute? We will walk you through how to set yourself up for a successful QBR step-by-step, spoiler alert – there is a lot of upfront leg work.

30-45 Days
Before QBR

Step 1: The Upfront Work

You want to plan for your QBR at least 30-days in advance. That's because you want to plan to have a few very critical conversations that will inform your QBR. Completing these exercises will help you keep things more strategic and informed, encourage equal participation with your customer, and remain *customer-focused*.

The SWOT Analysis

The Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis should be a thoughtful look at your customer so that you can identify blind spots and questions you still have.

Strengths and Weaknesses are about you and your company in relation to the customer. Evaluate what the customer likes about what you're doing and what key milestones you've hit, or risks you need to mitigate.

Opportunities and Threats should be focused on the customer within their environment (including regulatory environment if applicable). Evaluate how these may impact the customer.

Voice of Customer Interviews

This is where you speak to your most senior, impactful, contacts at your customer site and ask for 20-minutes to discuss what's going on with them. Questions should stay high level, forward-thinking, and strategic

What goals are we helping you to achieve?

How can we add more value to you next year?

What should we start, stop, continue?

How do you define success with our product or service?

Customer Goals

This should be constantly reinforced and questioned throughout the year. Try to come up with measurable fair goals with your customer and figure out how you are tracking, if anything needs to be adjusted, or if new goals need to be created.

15-30 Days

Before QBR

Step 2: Customer Buy-in and Engagement

Planning the entire meeting yourself means your client won't be very invested or engaged since they are only passively listening as you present. And what better way to keep a customer engaged and mutually invested than getting them involved in your presentation. While you may be hesitant to put any work on your customer, encouraging their involvement can help them look more strategic and knowledgeable in front of their peers. It's an opportunity for you *both* to look good.

Kevin Mockler, Strategic Account Executive at Confluent recommends, "before by QBR, I have my champion circulate within their team and company to come up with future opportunities for an expansion use case. That way my customer can come to the QBR with big ideas that can spark deal discussions and stroke executive imagination, and they look forward-thinking to their boss."



Pro Tip: After the presentation, send over a nice thank you note for their involvement and a small token of gratitude if applicable.

-Alex Raymond, Kapta CEO

3-5 Days
Before QBR

Step 3: Preparing Your Customer for the QBR

Send out your *short* PowerPoint deck in advance. While there, your QBR should be 75% a discussion – a short PowerPoint deck with the important information will help align everyone for the conversation, provide necessary context, and spark discussion and questions from the executive team.

Make sure to communicate that you won't be presenting this entire deck and wanted to send it over to them to make sure they had all the information they might need ahead of time. A good email should include:



The PowerPoint Attachment



A Call Out to Key Decision-makers
in your email to look at a few specific slides that would be most pertinent to them and their concerns



A Proposed Agenda

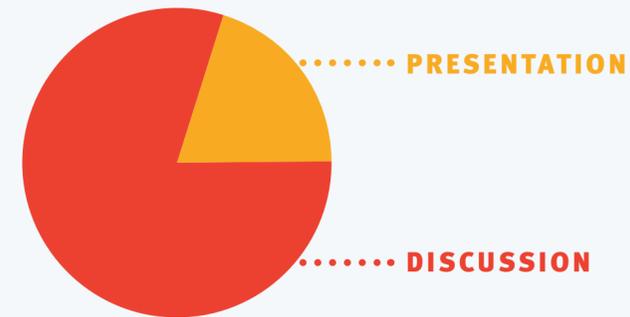


An Ask
for anyone to add anything they want to talk about to the agenda

The Day of the QBR

Step 4: How to Run a Productive QBR

Follow the 80/20 rule when presenting your QBR. That means 20-percent of your meeting should be the presentation and 80-percent discussion.



After Your QBR

Running your QBR with these tactics and strategies will help your customers see you in a whole new light, as a partner instead of a vendor. Your QBRs are going to feel more meaningful, more memorable, and more impactful for both you and your customer. Not only are you going to get to know your clients better, ensuring that you can make the most of any opportunities that present themselves, but you will be clearly differentiated from your competitors reducing risk within the account. Your QBRs are going to feel important to both you and your clients because you are showing up differently – as a strategic partner who is bringing value.



Additional Kapta Resources

Keep learning, keep growing.

The Kick-Ass QBR is a part of the Know, Act, Measure KAM Process (KAM) from Kapta. The KAM process is a proven methodology for transforming customer engagement through key account management.

Interested in learning more? Click [here](#) to check out our account management methodology and click [here](#) to check out our customer engagement platform.

Find additional resources and insights at [Kapta.com](https://www.kapta.com).



Start today.

Contact Kapta to learn more about Key Account Management, and how it can transform your organization.