

Closing the Collaboration Gap in RIM and Quality

Increasing Supply Chain Reliability in Contract Manufacturing and Generics

Executive Summary

Contract manufacturing has become the backbone of modern pharmaceutical supply. CMOs, CDMOs, and Active Substance manufacturers are essential to how sponsors bring products to patients. Yet the way these partners collaborate has not kept pace with the complexity of the work itself. Across regulatory, quality, and operational functions, information still moves through email threads, shared drives, and manual handoffs that were never designed for the scale or scrutiny of today's supply chain demand.

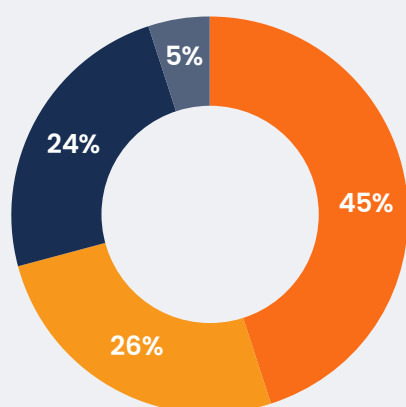
Recent polling at Veeva's EU Summit of regulatory and quality professionals working with external manufacturing partners confirms what many already sense: despite the recognition that technology can vastly improve collaboration, its use is inconsistent. In fact, technology is often cited as the leading barrier; in particular, the handover of data and documentation is where the most friction occurs. There is also hesitation to share real-time data, with respondents citing security complexity and the risk of full transparency as primary concerns, e.g., accidentally providing too much access or revealing proprietary information.

Closing this gap between internal alignment and external collaboration can reduce cycle times, strengthen audit readiness, and turn partner networks into a competitive advantage. Read on to learn about the current fragmented state of collaboration and how the right technology can fix it.

The inconsistent state of collaboration today

Across regulatory and quality functions, collaboration with external manufacturing partners is best described as inconsistent. When asked how they currently collaborate with external partners, respondents reported a wide spread of maturity:

Most external partnerships utilize an inconsistent mix of methods to collaborate



Mix - depending on partnership **Heavy paper & email**
Partners accessing shared spaces **Mostly electronic**

45%

collaborate via a mix that depends on each individual partnership — no standard operating model

5%

collaborate directly inside partners' systems in a shared, electronic environment

Internal collaboration consistently outscores collaboration with external partners on both digital maturity and effectiveness.

Source: industry roundtable polling, RIM and Quality collaboration in contract manufacturing and generics

This data reveals an industry without a standard operating model. Each new third-party relationship effectively starts from zero, with its own data-sharing conventions, file formats, and escalation paths. This variability is costly: it multiplies training overhead, increases the risk of version-control errors, and makes it harder for regulatory and quality teams to get a consistent view across a manufacturing network that may span dozens of partners.

Internal collaboration outpaces external collaboration

Respondents rated their digital maturity and effectiveness across three collaboration types on a 0 (low digital maturity, low effectiveness) to 5 (high digital maturity, high effectiveness) scale:

Collaboration type	Digital maturity (0-5)	Effectiveness (0-5)
Internal collaboration	3	2.6
Collaboration between Quality & Regulatory	2.1	2
Collaboration with partners	1.6	1.5

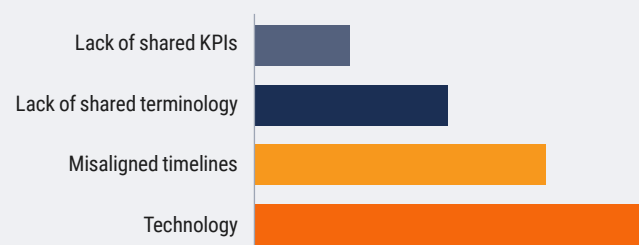
This outcome suggests organizations are still working to improve internal collaboration between quality and regulatory teams, with external partnerships lagging behind. The trend for small and mid-size biotechs to outsource to specialist manufacturers rather than building in-house manufacturing is increasing significantly, with the re-shoring and supply-chain resilience policy (post-COVID, amidst-shortage-crisis) pushing new EU manufacturing investment, particularly in APIs. The customers of these manufacturers are looking for partners who have visibility and agility when it comes to their supply chain. Time and trust are key, so utilising technology and leveraging process efficiencies to improve collaboration would positively impact this partnership.

Technology is top barrier to collaboration

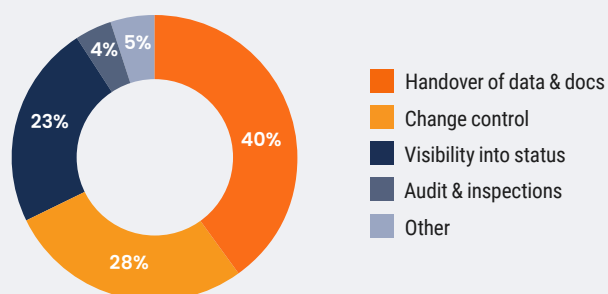
When asked to identify the single biggest barrier to seamless collaboration with external partners, respondents ranked technology as the top obstacle, ahead of misaligned timelines, lack of shared terminology, and lack of shared KPIs.

Technology is the top barrier; data handover is the top bottleneck

Biggest barrier to seamless collaboration



Where bottlenecks occur in external collaboration



Source: industry roundtable polling, RIM and Quality collaboration in contract manufacturing and generics

Without a shared digital environment or a clear transfer strategy, even well-aligned teams are limited by the tools available to them. When asked specifically where bottlenecks occur in day-to-day external collaboration, respondents pointed overwhelmingly to the handover of data and documents. This largely manual process naturally slows down collaboration, and the lack of visibility and misaligned timelines can frustrate teams.

Improvement considerations include:

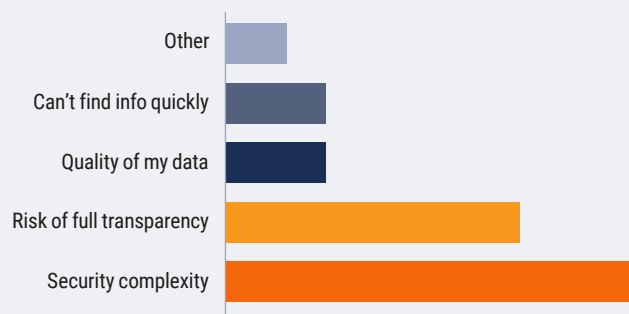
- Sponsors who have timely, accurate, and actionable insight into performance and operational status can maintain effective governance.
- Sponsors with complex supply chains that are best positioned to respond to HAs are those whose partners have consistent, audit-ready quality and regulatory documentation across harmonized systems, rather than reconciling it case by case.

Why the hesitation to share data?

The reluctance to share real-time data with partners is not a cultural quirk - it is a rational response to real risk.

Balancing transparency

Why hesitate to share real-time data with partners?



Security complexity
Solved by granular, role-based access — not by withholding data altogether.



Risk of full transparency
Solved by structured, governed exchange that shows each partner exactly what they need — and nothing more.

Source: industry roundtable polling, RIM and Quality collaboration in contract manufacturing and generics

Security complexity and the risk of full transparency are the greatest concerns. Notably, these are largely solvable technology and governance problems. Granular, role-based access controls and structured exchange environments directly address both concerns. Organizations are not opposed to transparency; they are opposed to transparency without control.

From fragmentation to trusted collaboration: a path forward

The data points to a consistent root cause beneath communication breakdowns, delays, and handover bottlenecks: most organizations are still operating without a shared, governed digital environment for regulatory and quality collaboration. While internal collaboration improves, external collaboration with manufacturing partners lags behind. Closing this gap requires action across four areas.



Align internally before extending outward

Establishing shared terminology, unified change-control processes, and an internal single source of truth for regulatory and quality data creates the foundation for a consistent, reliable interface to external partners.



Replace ad hoc exchange with structured, governed access

If technology and data/document handover is the bottleneck, the highest-leverage investment is to enable sponsors and manufacturing partners to exchange submission, registration, and quality content directly with a full audit trail, version control, and role-based permissions. This directly addresses the two leading causes of hesitation: security complexity and loss of control over transparency. Structured access does not mean unrestricted access; granular permissions extend real-time visibility into precisely what each partner needs, and nothing more.



Make oversight continuous

Real-time dashboards, shared status views, and proactive notifications shift quality and regulatory oversight from periodic audit cycles to continuous visibility. This is the mechanism that allows partnerships to maintain successful governance without micromanaging.



Treat the partnership, not just the project, as the unit of value

Organizations that bring partners into early discovery, document shared KPIs and terminology, and maintain continuity of project teams consistently report stronger outcomes than those that manage each engagement as a standalone transaction. Technology is the enabler, but the cultural commitment to transparency and shared accountability is what sustains this shift.

Closing the collaboration gap

The contract manufacturing and generics landscape has outgrown the email and portal-based collaboration models most organizations still rely on. The evidence is clear: technology, not process design or goodwill, is the solution to seamless collaboration, and the handover of data and documentation is where the greatest opportunity lies.

Replacing fragmented, ad hoc exchange with a connected, audit-ready environment will reduce cycle times, strengthen audit readiness, and turn manufacturing networks from a source of operational risk into a genuine source of competitive advantage.

Learn more about how [Veeva RIM](#) and [Veeva Quality Cloud](#) eliminate fragmentation by bringing end-to-end regulatory information management onto a single platform.



References

1. Veeva. 'RIM and Quality: Boosting Collaboration in Contract Manufacturing and Generics.' EU Summit 2026 session polling data — live audience survey of regulatory and quality professionals on collaboration practices, barriers, bottlenecks, and data-sharing hesitations with external manufacturing partners (CMO/CDMO/Active Substance).

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