

How to Get the Most out of a CDMO Relationship

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Outsourced Operations: Guidance and References (Examples)

Type	Title	Year
FDA Guidance for Industry	Cooperative Manufacturing Arrangements for Licensed Biologics	2008
	Contract Manufacturing Arrangements for Drugs: Quality Agreements	2016
EU Guidelines for GMP	EudraLex Volume 4 Chapter 7 Outsourced Activities	2013
ICH Quality Guidelines	Q7: Good Manufacturing Practice Guide for API	2000
	Q9 (R1): Quality Risk Management	2023
	Q10: Pharmaceutical Quality System	2008

Outsourced Operations: Guidance and References (Examples)

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PDA Technical Report	TR 57 Analytical Method Validation and Transfer for Biotechnology Products	2012
	TR 65 Technology Transfer (Revised)	2022
Other PDA Publications	Technology and Knowledge Transfer: Keys to Successful Implementation and Management	2014
	Biopharmaceutical Validation and Technical Transfer	2018
	Technology Transfer Industry Survey	2019
BioPhorum Best Practice Guidance	Quality Agreement Template	2024

Chapter 1: Role and Responsibilities of the Quality Unit

Who's Who?

Roles and Responsibilities of the Quality Unit

Sponsor

- Legally responsible for approving or rejecting services provided and products manufactured by CDMO, i.e., final release
 - Set clear expectations for the ways of working; Communications, Escalations, and Recognitions
 - Oversight without intervention
 - Collaborate without control

CDMO

- Manufacture products on behalf of Sponsor per agreements, while ensuring compliance with statutory cGMP and applicable cGMP regulations
 - Seek clarification and manage expectations realistically
 - Responsible for the resources, quality and timely delivery of products to Sponsor
 - Use quality metrics information to drive continuous improvement

Shared Responsibility: Manufacture safe and effective drug for patients

Chapter 2: Different Phases of a CDMO Relationship

Phase One – The Good

Establish a Relationship at the Beginning

- What happens when people first enter a relationship?
 - On their best behaviour
 - Only showcase their best side to impress the other party
 - Say “Yes” too fast without understanding the other person’s expectations
 - Willing to compromise to stay in the game

Common Pitfalls at this Phase

- Say “Yes” without asking the next question
 - Examples:
 - Do you apply “Phase appropriate GMP”?
 - **Yes (but we do not have separate quality systems)**
 - Do you have quality oversight of manufacturing?
 - **Yes (but QA is not always required to be on the shop floor)**
 - Do you have adequate qualified staff to perform the QA responsibilities?
 - **Yes (all my QA has been trained but they are only 3 months on the job)**
 - Do you always close investigations on time?
 - **Yes (after multiple extensions)**

Suggestions

- For Sponsor
 - Frame the questions based on quantifiable measures
 - Describe a project where you applied phase appropriate GMP. How would you handle quality records differently based on your procedure and system if it was a Phase I versus Commercial product?
 - Describe your quality philosophy and quality oversight model. What activities require QA to be physically present? What documents require QA approval? Are these clearly defined in the procedure?
 - What is the experience level of your quality staff? Do you have minimum requirements based on different roles? Can you show me an example of the QA Manufacturing staff job description?
 - The expectation from my company is to measure on time record closure based on original due date. Can you tell me your % on time closure of investigations based on original due date?

Suggestions

- For CDMO
 - Answer the questions based on what you can deliver or what you are committed to deliver
 - We have/have not applied phase appropriate GMP. However, we are willing to partner with you to understand your expectations and determine what requirements we can mutually agree on that can operate within our existing quality system.
 - Our current model requires QA to be physically present during critical operations, e.g., line clearance, aseptic connections, chain of identity verification. If your expectation is to have QA present for specific activities, we can determine the resource requirement and include the cost in the contract with measurable outputs.
 - We have different experience requirements for different QA roles based on complexity and criticality of the operations they perform. We can provide a summary of the requirements.
 - Once we agree on the due date for each record type, and if the due date is shorter than our current standard, we can determine the resource requirement and include the cost in the contract.

Chapter 3: Different Phases of a Relationship

Phase Two – The Bad

Maintain a Relationship During Challenges

- What happens when the rubber hits (typically we say “meets”) the road?
 - Theoretical discussions are now documented; commitments are now binding
 - Disagreements start to surface; some may be easy to resolve; while others put the relationship to test
 - When timeline and cost are involved, more people enter the conversation with different end goals in mind
 - Relationship becomes more tense; and team members may get more aggressive
 - Everyone becomes extremely sensitive about every comment and try to “poke holes”; and demands become unreasonable
 - While Sponsor is looking for perfection, CDMO is hoping for good enough

Exercise 1

- Scenario Description
 - An early phase Sponsor leverages CDMO's supplier qualification program to qualify suppliers of critical materials to manufacture their product.
 - Through an audit of a critical supplier, major deficiencies were observed, which do not readily meet the CDMO's criteria for supplier acceptance.
 - The supplier is the sole source for a critical material for the Sponsor's product.
- How to approach and resolve the situation?
 - As a Sponsor, what questions to ask or facts required.
 - As a CDMO, what and how much information to share and any alternative option available.

Chapter 4: Different Phases of a Relationship

Phase Three – The Ugly

Endure the Storm ... Together

- What happens when major quality events happen that can potentially impact timeline and cost?
 - Quality Units on both sides are challenged by their respective management
 - Sponsor Quality Unit tends to be more risk adverse because of the legal responsibility as Marketing Authorization Holder
 - CDMO Quality Unit needs to be patient and step through the reasoning they used to make a quality impact decision based on risk
 - The CDMO partner can gain creditability and trust by being transparent and forthcoming with all relevant information so the Sponsor Quality Unit can make a decision whether to accept or reject the CDMO's proposed approach to the quality event.

Exercise 2

- Scenario Description
 - During a requalification of an Aseptic Processing Simulation (APS), one sample had a sterility failure.
- How to approach and resolve the situation?
 - Taking timeline, cost and compliance into consideration, what are the key points from the Sponsor or CDMO that should be discussed to determine the conclusion of the APS?

Chapter 5: Navigate the Process

Building a long-lasting relationship

Forming a Partnership

- Be present and pay full attention
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Agree on the way of working including timeliness of information exchange, communication plan and escalation pathway, and follow what is agreed upon
- Find common ground when assessing risks; align on the end goal and navigate the path together to get there
- Be aware of your assumptions
- Align during planning to avoid forced acceptance after execution
- Step into each other's shoes and try to see from each other's perspective

Review Setback and Improve Together

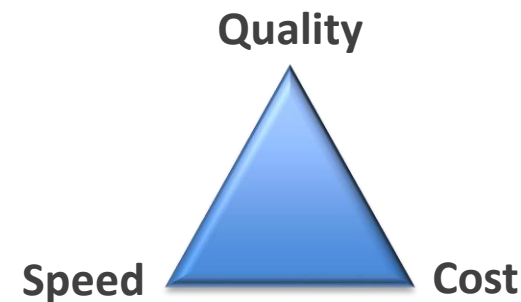
- Establish performance metrics
- Align on the interpretation of “compliance” requirements
- Acknowledge and manage differences
- Ask clarifying questions
- Review non-conformance
- Conduct lessons learned

Chapter 7: Summary

What Did We Learn?

Success Factors for a Strong CDMO Relationship

- Be clear, respectful and kind
- Be realistic about your expectations
- Make clear requests about what you want/need from others
- Express issues using facts and impact, avoid opinion and judgements
- Consider what is important to the other party
- Be transparent with information that is relevant to the decision
- Recognize each other's strengths and capabilities
- Being a true partner and build a relationship to last
- Adopt enterprise thinking and a win-win mindset



Thank You!

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