

## Your Business Case for Participating in QUALCON®



Staying up to date in Quality can be a challenge.

That's why participating in this year's conference experience offers a unique opportunity for your personal and professional development.

However, your organisation may not quite see it that way. You owe it to yourself to put forward a compelling case, to help your management make the right decision – which of course is to encourage you to participate.

That's why we have provided the information below. You can freely copy and adapt this to build your own compelling business case.

### **First, let's understand motivations:**

#### **How your manager may make the decision to approve your attendance**

Even in difficult economic times, most companies still have a training budget. You'll need to make the case that the best use of that budget is your attendance at this conference. Even if there is "no budget" your manager (or your managers' manager) will still likely have some discretionary funds they can tap into. In this instance, you may need to convince not only your immediate manager of the benefits of your attendance – but you may also need to help them convince their manager of the reasons why you should attend. They will be looking for you to convince them of several things:

- There are clearly defined benefits to attendance (ROI – return on investment)
- The expense is reasonable
- The time out of your diary is well spent

So, knowing that, it's clear where your business case needs to focus.

### **Understanding the Benefits that Impress**

Conferences offer tested and proven tools that are easily actionable and have tangible benefit.

The two main ways of extracting the benefits of attending this are education and networking.

#### ***Education***

Conferences are structured to really focus on specific educational and knowledge development subjects. These are published in advance. This enables you to easily develop the business case, and also serves as a check for you that the conference really does have the potential to deliver for you.

The best way to do that is to link specific conference sessions and speakers to address specific challenges you're facing. Then link that education to specific actions that you will take that will benefit your organisation.

Your manager may ask why you need to participate in a conference for this, when you can go to a local training course, or simply buy a book, or resort to Google. These all seem reasonable options. However only at Qualcon® can you have such a smorgasbord of topics offering such a concentrated learning opportunity from speakers who have been carefully selected and vetted to deliver value. When combined with the networking component, it can't be matched by the other options.

However, details are vital. Content is clearly king! Review the conference program and identify the sessions that have particular relevance or resonance to your organisation's current situation. Specifically identify sessions that promise real value for you.

Some details you'll need to identify include:

- Examples of successes delivered by speakers from other comparable organisations.
- Information regarding challenges that your manager / organisation is specifically facing.
- New technologies and tools that you're not using or have not fully evaluated.
- To help you reduce costs or "do more with less."
- To ensure that you avoid mistakes: candid sessions combined with informal discussion and questions (ie networking again!) will help you avoid repeating costly mistakes made by other companies.
- To help you do even more with what you already have. Learn how to maximize the value of your existing initiatives.
- Best practices. Many conference sessions are geared towards benchmarking best practices. Your attendance and report means that your manager can get a clear picture of what the competition is doing.
- Training. Which streams and workshops are right for you? All are designed to teach a specific group of delegates a special skill or set of tools and approaches that are immediately actionable back in the office.

### **Networking**

Although networking is a very important benefit, it can be difficult to quantify the value to your organisation, and it can come across as just professional partying. However, many delegates report that hearing of solutions or approaches to problems while in a networking environment is often the most valuable aspect of a conference – but it's speculative and hard to measure.

However, networking offers some real potential benefits. At any conference, you'll have access to people who are really accomplished in their careers, and who themselves may be well-connected. Conference participation enables you to tap into that. In effect you can obtain valuable professional advice, which would otherwise be inaccessible or very expensive, for the cost of the attendance investment. Presenters are always very happy to engage deeply with you. Also, you can ask for introductions from the organisers or other (often new-found) professional colleagues.

So focus on specific networking outcomes, within the broader context of the conference, which will directly benefit your organisation. The way to do this, is to identify specific challenges that you are seeking to overcome, and to do so will require expert advice. We'll explore this further down.

There's also a further benefit of networking. It isn't just a transient experience. The best managers are highly connected. They are able to tap into these connections for help, information, advice and recommendations. Networking leads to the forging of new relationships with those working in areas of interest. You'll be able to tap into these. Networking is not a single activity. It's a dynamic, ongoing process that delivers ROI into the future. Many people report how they reached out, years later, to a contact they made while networking at a conference.

### **Quantifying the Benefits**

Although you might understand the benefits of the sessions, your manager may not. Therefore, to be most effective in justifying the conference, you will need to clearly articulate the connection between your organisation's knowledge and skill requirements and the conference program.

Don't presume that your manager will be able to automatically make those distinctions.

To focus your thinking, and assist your manager to come to the correct decision, use the following Benefits Worksheet. It will help you and your manager focus on the benefits. Review the conference brochure,

highlighting sessions that will address your needs. Bringing the brochure, along with this worksheet to your manager for joint decision-making. The following are some examples:

**Benefits Table**

Your Organisation's Current Need	Conference Programming To Address That Need
To keep up to date with changes in Quality	
To benchmark and learn the latest strategies	
Get practical solutions to complex problems	
To learn directly from other organisations	
To generate new business	
To gain specific technical knowledge	
To obtain a competitive edge	
To evaluate new trends	
Discover new approaches to standard situations	
Investigate real-world case studies delivered by exceptional speakers	
Schedule a one-on-one provider meeting (your own provider or any other)	
Earn points toward CPD requirements	
Evaluate new products and services in the workshops that complements the conference	
Debriefing back to your organisation (report, memos, company social media, presentations, team meetings etc)	

## Justifying the Investment

Before you can even begin to justify conference expenses, you need to calculate what those expenses are. To do so, you can use the following Expenses Worksheet.

### *Investment Table*

Expense	Details	Cost
Conference Registration	<i>Early Bird pricing offers an incentive, and a decision date.</i>	\$
Pre conference workshops	<i>These are optional, but can be of considerable value, especially if a renowned presenter is delivering it.</i>	\$
Travel expenses	<i>Often there are free to low cost shuttle services from airports to hotel. This can cut significant costs from the budget.</i>  <i>There are numerous accommodation options within walking distance of Qualcon® 2023 venue.</i>	\$
Accommodation and meal costs	<i>See <a href="http://www.qualcon.com.au">www.qualcon.com.au</a> for suggestions on local accommodation providers within walking distance of Qualcon® 2023 venue.</i>  <i>Also, remember that generous morning and afternoon teas are provided, as well as lunch.</i>  <i>Qualcon® 2023 includes a cocktail function (Wednesday night), and Gala Dinner (Thursday night) - both optional, which provides yet another networking opportunity.</i>	\$
Subtotal		\$

## Time well spent

Conferences can be very hard work! You will leave feeling tired. Your manager needs to understand that, far from being a pleasant diversion, you will be working as hard during the duration of the conference as you would in the office.

Your day will start early, you'll be working through lunch, and will be hard at it until the conference sessions wrap up around 5.30pm. No social events take place during conference programming time.

And the social events in the evening are excellent networking opportunities – which is why conferences have them! So you will be “working” well into the evening.

## **Advance preparation and goal setting**

Identifying what you want from the conference is essential – but also don't forget to ask what your manager wants from the conference. Request to interview your manager before you attend the conference and ask them for specific information they want you to receive, or questions they want answered – then pledge to do all you can in those three days to obtain it. Using the Benefits Worksheet provided above can help you manage and address their expectations.

Learning that benefits you and your peers: Your manager and colleagues will get a full report (written, verbal, seminar) on your attendance and what you learned.

Explain that you'll take detailed notes at the conference and provide a post-event report and meeting within 2 weeks to your manager and colleagues that will communicate and share both the key lessons learned (as applicable to your organisation's needs) and the specific action points you recommend taking based on your learning experience, using whatever tools your company has (newsletters, lunchtime talk, webinar, company social media etc)

Your commitment to share the knowledge you received with others on your team will dramatically increase ROI of your attendance. Additionally, by tangibly demonstrating the lessons learned from the conference, leadership should be more willing to fund your participation in the future.

The best reports encourage people to come and ask you further questions. There is rarely much value in a 10-page report.

Instead, a two or three page summary, with URLs and pointers is more impressive. Another option is to offer to meet with your colleagues for a recap the first week after the conference. Also, making presentations to others in your group who did not attend is an excellent way to deepen your education while also sharing valuable knowledge and techniques.

Conferences provide the papers and presentations either at the time of the conference or soon after for you to review and use to share knowledge.

## **Implement, Implement, Implement**

It's essential to convey that Qualcon® will not be abstract book learning. Presenters provide practical takeaways you can use back at your company. Your sessions will be packed full of proven and tested real-world tips, tools and techniques that will benefit your company.

## **Value for money**

Hiring a single consultant of the calibre of the presenters at Qualcon® would cost your firm many times the cost of your admission, and you'd get only one person's advice rather than a whole faculty of experts, peers and competitors.



## **Unique – biennial opportunity**

There is no other event like Qualcon® for value and depth of learning. You must convey that you simply will not be able to get this level of information in one place anywhere else in the next 2 years. That leaves your firm 2 years behind its competitors, and therefore at a disadvantage.

The unique Qualcon® conference program is designed to provide you with unique networking and learning opportunities beyond the scope of the usual conference experience.

You can only get this at AOQ!

## **Now, all that's left is to put it all in writing to your Manager**

We've taken the opportunity to put together a letter, below that – if appropriate – you should feel free to customize and use in support of your attendance:

### ***Subject: Participation in Qualcon® Conference***

*There is a coming conference opportunity that I'd like to participate in, which I will explain below.*

*The conference is AOQ's biennial Qualcon to be held at Deakin University Waterfront Campus, Geelong on 11 – 13 October 2023.*

*I believe this offers direct business benefits to our organisation.*

*I appreciate that my attendance will represent a considerable investment in terms of time and money so you'll also find a breakdown of expected costs and my plan for extracting maximum value from the investment. You'll also read my plan for providing you and the team with a full post-conference report to ensure we update our knowledge and identify executable initiatives and improvements.*

*The Conference is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for our organisation to learn from the leading practitioners in the sector.*

*This year's event is especially relevant. <Explain why (theme is Quality 5.0 : People, Processes and Performance with Integrity)> The conference is an intensive program of plenary education and breakout learning sessions that are designed to be immediately actionable back at the office.*

*Below, I've outlined some of the immediate challenges that we're currently facing. Alongside you'll find the conference sessions that I believe will help give us the solutions:*

### ***Benefits***

*<Insert the Benefits Table here>*

*I will provide a full post-conference report outlining the specific lessons learned and my recommendations.*

### ***Investment***

*<Insert the Investment Table here>*



*I believe that the specific benefits to us of my attendance at this conference represent an appropriate use of our training budget. I am confident that my participation will deliver tangible dividends.*

*I think for all of these reasons, attending this conference will really benefit my ability to deliver better outcomes in the work that I do every day. The conference is extremely good value compared to other events in the industry, and I hope you can see that the investment is worthwhile.*

**Next Steps**

*I would like to meet with you to review this proposal, and add in specific outcomes that you would like from my participation, to ensure that your expectations are met.*

*Regards,*

*Attached:*

*<Summarise the information above on the Networking and Educational benefits as an attachment>*

*<Include or have available for your meeting the Conference program and other information>*