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Mastering the
QBR Process
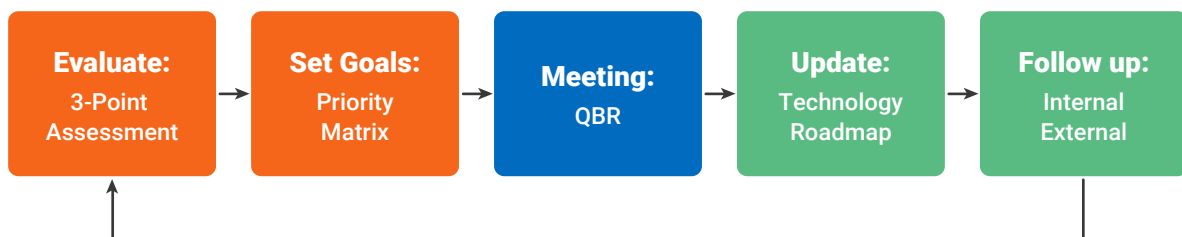
Strategic Tips To Scale Your MSP

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Introduction

Even with the best intentions, there are many challenges that Managed Service Providers face when it comes to quarterly business reviews (QBRs). Some of the biggest struggles can be chalked up to lack of client engagement, dead end proposals or difficulty getting facetime with key decision makers.

As a result, QBRs tend to get a bad rap as there seems to be more work involved than the return on investment. However, MSPs can easily turn the odds in their favor by making a few minor adjustments to what is often mistakenly seen as a rinse and repeat process.

To get the right decision makers to the table, it's vital that these meetings are conducted in a strategic way. For MSPs, it's as easy as following five simple tips. Rather than rushing to prepare in the days leading up to a QBR, service providers can scale up and maintain sustainable growth by:

- ☐ **Easily getting a 360-view for each client on a monthly basis**
- ☐ **Knowing how to strategically prioritize issues, topics and agenda items**
- ☐ **Matching your QBR preparation time by the amount of MRR each client brings in**
- ☐ **Using a technology roadmap to successfully staff all ongoing projects**
- ☐ **Knowing which means of communication is best suited for the topic at hand**

Evaluate:	→	Set Goals:	→	Meeting:	→	Update:	→	Follow up:
3-Point Assessment		Priority Matrix		QBR		Technology Roadmap		Internal External

Tip #1. Evaluate - Three-Point Assessment

One of the biggest nuisances you may face when it comes to QBRs is having to scramble to get all your facts and figures ready in time. However, there is a better way. Rather than trying to scavenge everything in the days leading up to the meeting, step one of the scalable QBR process is to continuously keep track of client data on a monthly basis.

While this is an internal task that doesn't need to be communicated to clients, MSPs should conduct a three-point assessment as part of a monthly routine. By doing so, you can ensure that nothing falls through the cracks and that your team is better prepared for any future QBRs.

During these evaluations, the three areas to assess are:

1. Project Work

You likely have multiple simultaneous projects for each client at any given time. By assessing the status and progress of each project, your team can have a proper understanding of what's been completed, what's on track to complete on time or if there are any hiccups and bottlenecks.

You'll also want to ensure that you acknowledge all recently closed projects with clients. Even with small clients, this is a quick win for MSPs and is as simple as sending an email about a successful project. Just be sure to keep an eye out for stalled projects or where engagement is low so you can take proactive steps to get your project back to a good place.

2. Software & Hardware Assets

To check on the health and status of your clients' assets, you'll want to refer to your Asset Lifecycle Management (ALM) tool. Things to look out for should include anything that is new, anything that has been changed or anything that doesn't meet your standards and policies.

This is also where you'll want to proactively look ahead. Make note of anything at risk or coming out of warranty soon so that you can make preventive recommendations.
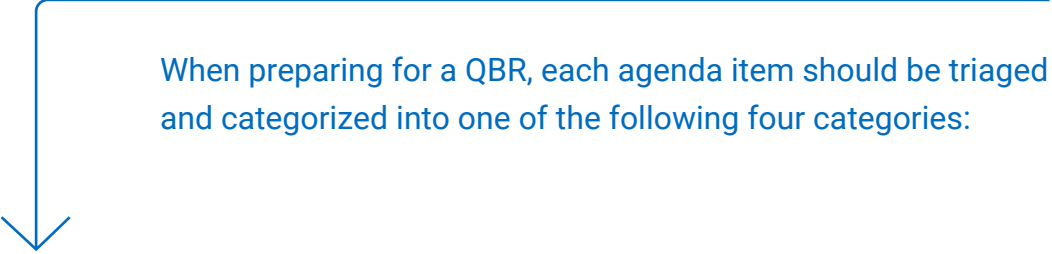
3. Issues

Lastly, be sure to do a run through of all client tickets and look for hotspots or patterns. Are there certain assets causing a large bulk of tickets? Are there certain types of recurring tickets?

Slow ticket resolution and recurring issues are signs of hotspots with clients. Often these can be used as leverage points to encourage clients to adopt best practice standards of operations or a standardized technology stack

Assess Projects	Assess SW/HW Assets	Assess Issues
Source: PSA Projects Project Roadmap	**Source:** ScalePad Project Roadmap	**Source:** PSA Tickets Critical Systems
Indicate change, update on any project, evaluate what is coming up and what the team is prepared to work on across all clients.	Review the devices and make decisions on renewals (add to projects) warranty extensions and decommission	Review service ticket load, best practice adoption issues, tech stack adoption issues and general CSAT surveys

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Tip #2. Set Goals - Priority Matrix

MSPs are constantly told that their QBR needs to be strategic but what does that even mean? A strategic QBR brings only the most important topics to your meeting with your client. This priority matrix is a useful framework to help determine which items to discuss.

> When preparing for a QBR, each agenda item should be triaged and categorized into one of the following four categories:

Important - Urgent

As first priority topics for any in-person client interactions, this category is for any new problems that need to be addressed urgently to kickoff.

If the issue is small, you can prepare an action plan and a ticket to resolve the problem. However if the issue is significant, such as servers that will soon be out of warranty, you'll want to come prepared with an action plan to ask for approval.

Fortunately, proactive MSPs typically don't have agenda items that will fall into this category.

Important - Not Urgent

While these are second priority topics for any in-person client interactions, these agenda items will take up most of the meeting time since proactive MSPs shouldn't have too many important - urgent issues.

Important - not urgent agenda items include plans for long-term or upcoming projects that will need the most discussion, questions and interactions. This is your opportunity to prepare clients for things like standard option issues, asset lifecycle planning, budget or project scoping.
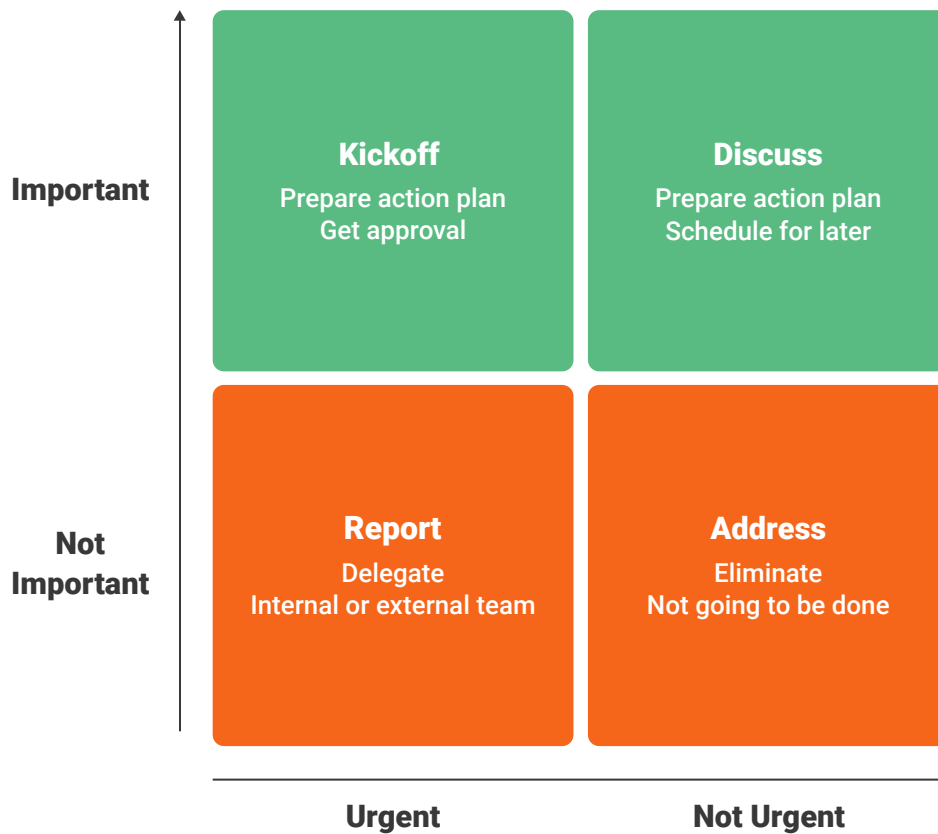
Not Important - Urgent

Any agenda items in this category should be left out of QBRs and addressed by sending a report. This way you can still notify executives of your findings or ideas while saving the time for conversations that are more relevant to your client. It should be as simple as notifying the client that you've emailed them a report that they can review afterwards.
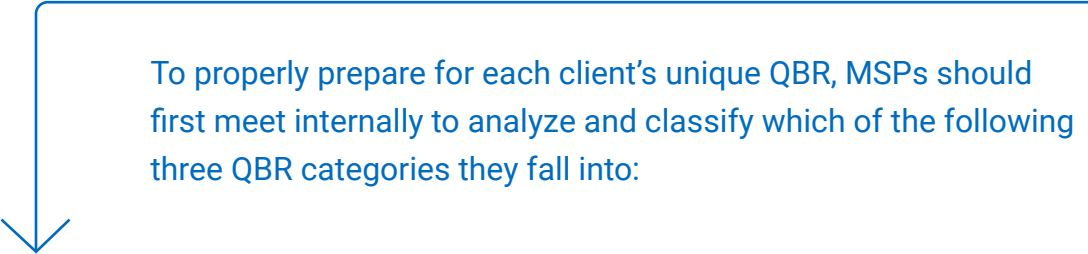
Not Important - Not Urgent

As a service provider, you might have tickets, requests or any other input that is either out of scope or insignificant. The best approach for these items is to consolidate them into a list with the intent of eliminating them all together. You can then present this list to the client to confirm that the items won't be fulfilled.

Ultimately, the priority matrix is intended to help you save time and increase the perceived value of your discussions. As a result, QBRs should only include items that fall into the green boxes as they're deemed important. Anything that falls within the red boxes, should be completed by other means of communication such as an email, a report or a phone call.

	Urgent	**Not Urgent**
Important	**Kickoff** Prepare action plan Get approval	**Discuss** Prepare action plan Schedule for later
Not Important	**Report** Delegate Internal or external team	**Address** Eliminate Not going to be done

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Tip #3. Meeting - Quarterly Business Review

One thing Managed Service Providers need to understand is that there's no such thing as a uniform QBR process. Service providers should expect to have a different type of QBR cadence and process depending on each client's needs and your MSP's capacity.

To properly prepare for each client's unique QBR, MSPs should first meet internally to analyze and classify which of the following three QBR categories they fall into:

High Touch QBR

Accounts in this category should be bringing in a minimum of $10,000 in monthly recurring revenue or have approximately 70 to 80 seats. These clients are large and their complexity is high therefore this client will need more attention from you.

As a result, your QBR prep time and three-point assessment from tip #1 should be around eight hours combined.

These QBRs might involve a lot of people from multiple departments and there may be multiple decision makers with internal politics at play. As a result, it might be best to do QBRs more frequently or to have longer sessions to cover multiple agenda points.

Medium Touch QBR

If an account brings in between $1,500 to $10,000 in monthly recurring revenue, then it would classify as a medium touch account. When it comes to QBR prep time for these accounts, providers should anticipate dedicating around three to seven hours, including the time needed for your three-point assessment.

For clients in this middle range, one formal QBR per quarter should be sufficient and you'll most likely be engaging with just one individual. To keep these sessions engaging and short, service providers may want to consider distributing the agenda items across the four quarters.

Low Touch QBR

For accounts bringing in less than $1,500 in monthly recurring revenue or those that have approximately 10 seats, these clients would fall into the low touch QBR category. As a result, service providers should only be spending around one to three hours in QBR prep time and three-point assessment combined.

These clients shouldn't require as much work as their complexity is low. In terms of your own ROI, your budget can't afford to spend as much facetime with them. For low touch clients, it's best practice to have an official session every year with a shorter session to follow in the midterm. You can also supplement these sessions with quick check up calls every once in a while.
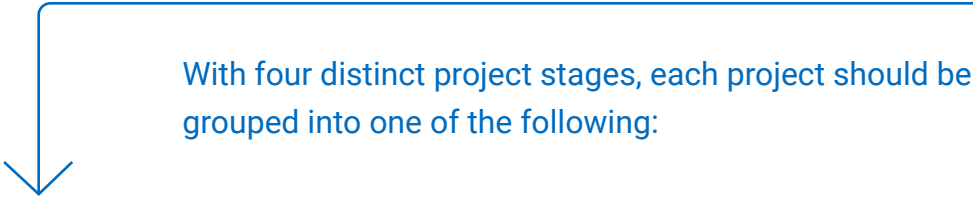
As a quick rule of thumb, the amount of preparation for each type of QBR should be reflected in the MRR that each particular client brings in. You shouldn't spend too much time preparing for QBRs with your smallest clients as it will eat up your margins for this client very quickly. Regardless of which QBR category an account falls into, just be sure to set proper expectations both internally and with your client.
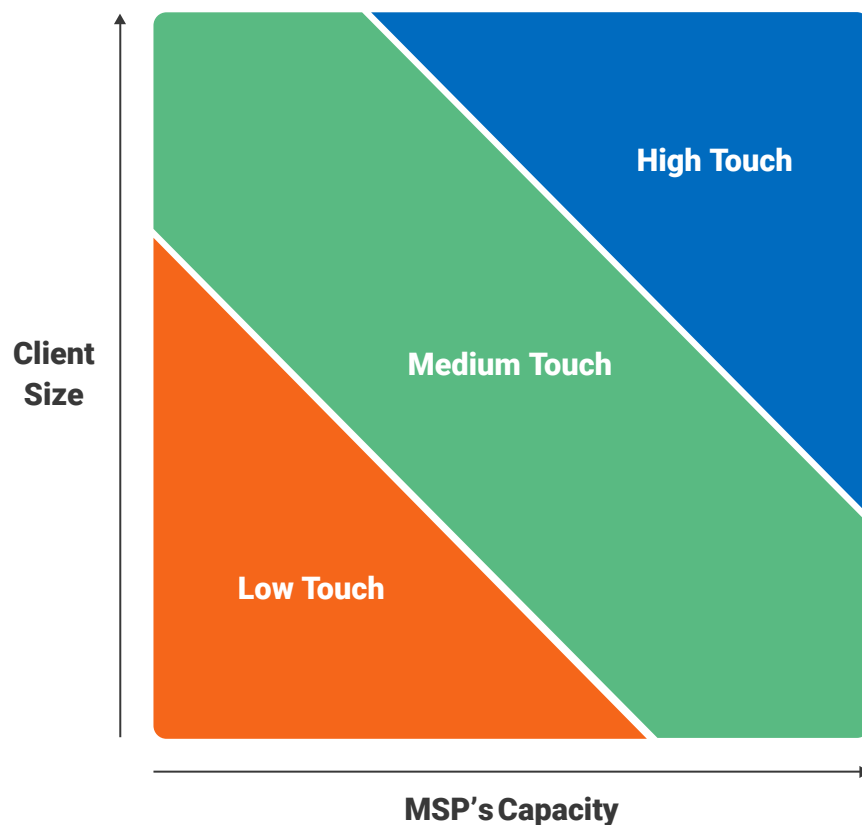
Tip #4. Update - Technology Roadmap

A technology roadmap should be the lifeline for your strategy around client technology innovation. Technology roadmaps should contain any content that falls in the "Important - Not Urgent" category in the priority matrix from tip #2.

From status updates to getting approvals and working on budgets, the technology roadmap is also your opportunity to chat with clients about their projects. Technology roadmaps can be used to help set expectations with clients when discussing how each project and their budget will be distributed throughout the year. For MSPs, these discussions will help forecast upcoming project revenue as well as any progress toward the client adoption of technology stack standards.

With four distinct project stages, each project should be grouped into one of the following:

Project Ideas

Whether the client had a request, your team saw an area to fix or one of your assessments found something needing to be done, all projects in your roadmap will start as an idea.

Project Scopes

Starting to elaborate on the goal of the project, the deliverables or the potential solutions will trigger moving the project into the scoping phase. Try using project templates to help you progress through this phase quickly and to prepare the project for presentation.

Project Approvals

Once the scope has been created, you can put together a project proposal to present to your client. Even if you include projects in your agreement, a new project still might need to be approved.

Project Schedules

Once a project is approved, you'll need a complete master project roadmap for your entire MSP. It's important to make sure that you have enough technician capacity for all of the projects that you have going on across all clients.

Try to schedule less time-sensitive projects when there's lower utilization times such as during the summer when people are prone to take vacation. This can help prevent your team from being burnt out by the end of the year.

Above all else, make sure to communicate the project schedule to your client. It won't make for a pleasant experience if you rush them to make a decision on something you say is urgent but then the work doesn't get started for another 3 months.
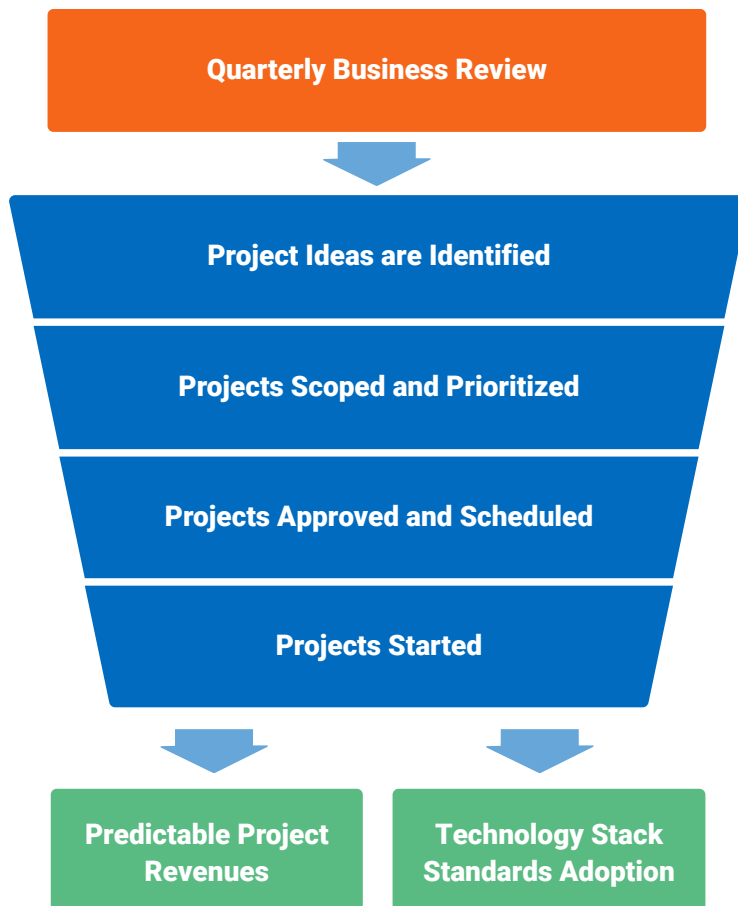
Tip #5. Follow Up: External and Internal

The communication that takes place throughout the year is just as important as the QBR itself. The following framework is intended to help you decide how to collaborate with your team and your clients between official client engagement meetings.

External Small: Email

To make the best use of everyone's time, any small follow-up item should be sent by email to the client. Whether it's a reminder, a link, an idea or a solution, we suggest sending short emails

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covering one topic at a time. This way clients can send it to their team or have an email thread over one topic only.
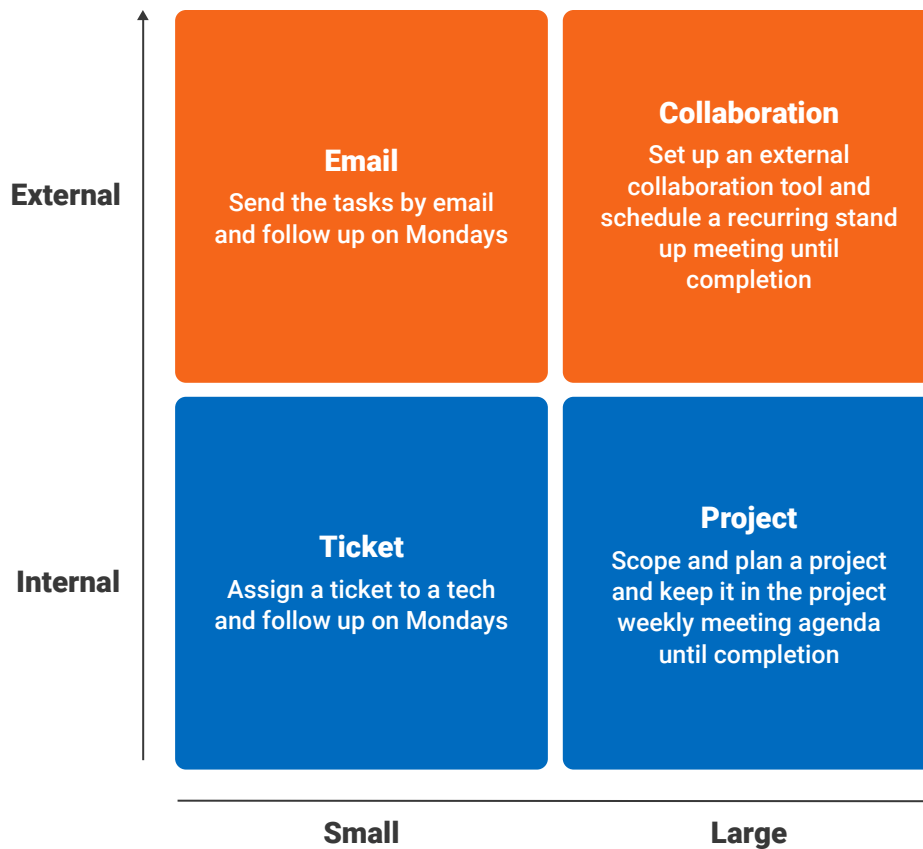
External Large: Collaboration

If you need to follow-up on any major items, such as a proposal for a project or a potential solution, collaboration is the key. Phone calls, Microsoft Teams meetings or even a chat tool can help support the efficiency and transparency that's needed for successful collaboration.

Internal Small: Ticket

If you need to follow-up on quick, short or smaller items, an internal ticket is the way to go. Use your ticketing system to track your time, refer the issue later back to the client, and close the loop.

Internal Large: Project

If you need to follow-up on a larger item, try to present it as a project or opportunity. Even if you're not ready to start the project, everybody will see the potential magnitude of the issue, and it will get the needed attention and structure to push through the initiative.

External

Email
Send the tasks by email and follow up on Mondays

Collaboration
Set up an external collaboration tool and schedule a recurring stand up meeting until completion

Internal

Ticket
Assign a ticket to a tech and follow up on Mondays

Project
Scope and plan a project and keep it in the project weekly meeting agenda until completion

Small   **Large**

Conclusion

For QBRs to be successful, it's important for MSPs to view these meetings from the client's perspective to determine what's in it for them and what they care about most. With these five tips mastered, it will become easier to get facetime with the right decision-makers for QBRs. As a result, clients will be more likely to see the value in your services, which will allow you to expand and provide new projects with less effort on selling and negotiating.

Ready to Put These Strategic Tips to Use?

ScalePad helps MSPs easily identify and prioritize asset risks and opportunities. It utilizes insightful reports to communicate asset statuses to customers in a way that helps them see the value in making important IT investments and drives them to take action to improve their environment. To see this in action, sign up for a Free Trial or speak to your sales representative today.

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