



# 7 Steps Toward **AUDIT READINESS**

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Adequately preparing and planning for a compliance audit is the key to success. Before beginning the project, decisions have to be made and there may be several questions you will be asking for a seamless execution. When thinking about an audit, it can be tempting to delay the process. However, without adequate and validated safeguards in place, your customers and prospects may lose trust in your company, your reputation could suffer and your organization could face regulatory issues.





## Here's the good news:

Going through an audit can be painless if you effectively plan and prepare. See the 7-step checklist that will help you better handle this exercise.

# GETTING STARTED

Before your compliance partner begins field work, you should have a process in place for how the audit will be managed.

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### Having a process in place to prepare for audits:

- Improves communication among your team members
- Makes your internal controls stronger with best practices you may have not seen before
- Increases your customers' trust in your organization
- Establishes a framework you can embed into your normal business operations
- Keeps your company out of the headlines for security issues



# 7 STEPS TOWARD **AUDIT READINESS**

## STEP 1 CREATE A PLAN



- Determine who will be on the audit readiness team
- Who will be the owner of the process? (Generally Information Security, Compliance or Risk Management)
- Create a framework to determine who will interact and provide evidence to the auditors
- Create milestones and deadlines for each person
- Set internal service level agreements (SLAs)
- Identify who will serve as a backup if someone is out of town or ill

## STEP 2 COMPILE YOUR PREVIOUS AUDIT MATERIALS



You have probably already gone through internal and external audits and reviews. Since you have invested time in these, it's in your best interest to use and reuse your documentation. Inventory your previously completed audits and certifications to see what information you've amassed.

**Previous compliance audits could include the following:**

- SOC examinations
- Cloud audits
- PCI audits
- HIPAA/HITECH examinations
- HITRUST certifications
- ISO 27001 certification
- NIST 800-53 examinations
- Privacy audits
- Internal audits
- FISMA/FedRAMP validations



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## STEP 3 CREATE AND USE A FRAMEWORK



Once you've completed several audit preparation cycles, you'll be able to build your own audit framework. Or, you can use an industry approved framework.

### How to Create an Audit Framework:

- Map the audits you have already performed to build your own framework
- Map controls to the framework you have chosen
- Implement continuous improvement through self-assessment
- Use frameworks to assess your control environment
- Ask others on your team or those who have been involved in previous certifications or audits to review the framework
- Automate processes

## STEP 4 REMEDIATION



As you move through your framework, it's common to find deficiencies. For example, you might find evidence of a policy you follow informally but don't have documented. Be prepared to address any items that require remediation.

## STEP 5 UPDATE DOCUMENTATION



Now that you're aware of the deficiencies within your process, you will need to update your documentation, policies and procedures. Make sure your centralized documentation is also updated and available to everyone.





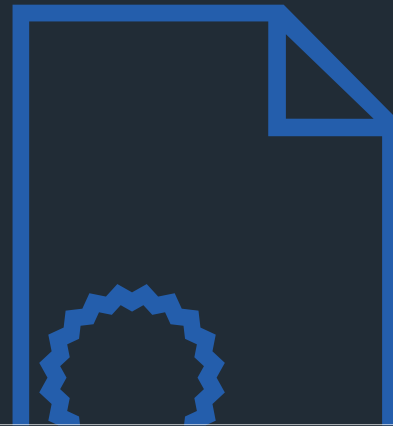


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### **STEP 6** **NOW YOU'RE READY FOR YOUR AUDIT OR CERTIFICATION**



When selecting a partner to perform your audit or certification, choose one that can leverage your work and can perform multiple assessments simultaneously. This can save time and keep things moving along efficiently.



### **STEP 7** **DEBRIEF**



During the first few months of implementing a process for compliance audits, meet with your team after each step to review what worked and what didn't. Then refine the process, make it more efficient, see where the lags were and change them. This is an important step because it allows you to cut the time and resources needed to prepare for future audits or certifications.

**Is there a compliance audit you've been putting off?**

**[Click here to schedule a quick chat](#)**

about how we can help you get ready for your next audit.

