

QA SIGN-OFF MEETING – PROJECT FORGE

Project Forge is entering a critical phase. The new automated inspection system—part of FerraSteel’s digital upgrade, is almost ready to go live. It’s designed to streamline QA workflows and feed real-time inspection data into the company’s ERP system.

Three key people are involved in signing off this final stage:

- Julia (Head of QA) is under pressure following recent customer audit concerns. She has made it clear that quality must not be compromised. Her team has rewritten procedures and requires formal test evidence before signing off.
- Tomasz (Senior Systems Architect, IT) believes the QA process is becoming overly bureaucratic. He has implemented similar integrations successfully in the past and feels that delays are being caused by unnecessary red tape. He wasn’t brought into early planning and resents what he calls “checklist theatre.”
- Emma (Project Manager) is trying to keep the rollout on schedule. The European board is closely tracking progress, and sign-off is now two weeks overdue. She is also aware that tensions between QA and IT are increasing and could undermine delivery.

This is the third attempt to finalise the handover. The last two meetings ended without agreement and with rising friction between the parties.

The meeting

Emma opens the meeting in a neutral tone, masking the pressure she feels to get a result today.

Emma: Thanks for making the time, both of you. We’re here to finalise readiness for the inspection module handover. Our aim is to agree what’s outstanding—and if we can, walk out with a formal go-live date.

Julia is seated with a printed process map and audit checklist. She nods but doesn’t smile. Tomasz arrives four minutes late, earbuds around his neck, and drops into his chair mid-sentence.

Tomasz: I deployed the latest patch to staging last night. The log’s clean. You can run whatever checks you want now—it’s good.

Julia (without looking at him): We still don’t have evidence for the high-defect batch scenario. That’s been on the list since last Friday.

Tomasz (shrugs): That test is no different from the last one. I ran it. If you want a screenshot, I can send one later.

Julia turns toward Emma instead.

Julia: We need full verification logs—not screenshots. We’ve already flagged two noncompliances on traceability. It’s not optional.

Tomasz (flatly): The system is traceable. Just not in the way you documented it six years ago.

Emma raises a hand to steady the tone.

Emma: Let's pause. I know this is a pressure point. Julia, can you walk us through exactly what's still needed for QA to sign off?

Julia clicks through a slide titled "Readiness Validation Criteria."

Julia: We need three things to close this:

1. Evidence that the system captures edge-case defects in real time
 2. A full test log for those scenarios
 3. Confirmation that the output can be pulled during a live audit
- QA has to own that last part—we're the ones who'll be on the hook if it fails in front of a customer.

Tomasz exhales loudly and leans back.

Tomasz: This is exactly why things take twice as long. We're chasing paperwork for something we already know works. It's not broken. We're just ticking boxes to make people feel safe.

Julia (sharper): It's not about feelings. It's about compliance. This is part of the quality standard you signed off when we started the integration.

Tomasz: I signed off on integration. Not a pile of admin that gets bolted on after the fact.

Emma steps in more firmly now.

Emma: Okay. Let's name what's happening here. We've got a system that works technically—but the handover protocol and documentation aren't aligned with QA's needs. If we don't resolve this, the go-live date slips again.

There's a pause.

Julia: Emma, I'm trying to prevent another audit gap. I've worked hard to rebuild trust with our customers. I can't sign off based on screenshots and 'it works, trust me.' We've been burned by that before.

Tomasz (quieter, but still firm): Then maybe QA should've been at the design table, not showing up with red pens at the end.

Julia closes her laptop and places both hands on the table.

Julia: This isn't about showing up late. This is about holding a line that matters—for product integrity, not politics.

Emma looks between them. No eye contact is being made.

Emma: Let's call a five-minute break. We're not getting anywhere right now. When we come back, I'd like to hear from both of you what success actually looks like—not just technically or procedurally, but practically. Because we've got to solve this together—and right now, we're stuck in a loop.

Reflection questions

Use the Circle of Conflict model to explore the root causes of this situation.

1. Which types of conflict are visible here? (Relationship, Data, Interests, Structure, Values, Moods/Externals)
2. Which type seems most dominant—and why?
3. What assumptions might each person be making about the others?
4. If you were Emma, what would you do after the break?
5. What could be done to reduce tension without compromising what matters to each person?
6. Are any of these tensions caused by process or structure, rather than personality or attitude?
7. What shared interests or values might be used to rebuild collaboration?
8. Where might silence or sarcasm be masking something more important that needs to be surfaced?