Onspring

A Buyer's Guide to Modern GRC Platforms

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Executive Summary

A new GRC platform will define your organization's GRC strategy for years to come. It's important to make sure the solution you choose can meet your current objectives and has the ability to evolve alongside your organization and its threat landscape as well as advance your overall GRC maturity level .

Learn more about why a dedicated GRC platform is a must-have and how to evaluate various solutions on the market—with an eye on both immediate and future needs.

The Complex Landscape of Modern GRC

Today, the attack surface of an enterprise is unbelievably complex. From third-party risks and increasingly stringent privacy regulations, to shadowAI usage and sprawling, hybrid ecosystems, threats arise from virtually anywhere.

Current Status of the Enterprise IT Ecosystem

Organizations use an average of

897 applications.

Nearly

85% of businesses

throughout the course of their daily operations.

Cloud computing has been adopted by

94%

of all enterprises globally.

Governance, risk and compliance (GRC) teams have the monumental task of managing these risks and demonstrating compliance, but they're often left without the resources to do so. Today, GRC teams are in survival mode due to a combination of the following factors:

- Organizations are overwhelmed by regulatory change, data growth and increased cyber threats.
- The persistent gap in GRC headcounts forces teams into a reactive posture, where managing immediate threats comes at the expense of long-term strategic oversight.
- Many teams are still relying on spreadsheets, SharePoint and manual workflows.
- Leadership wants stronger visibility into risks but is frustrated by fragmented data.
- Audits are more frequent and more demanding.
- AI adoption is accelerating but still poorly governed in many organizations.
- Risk, compliance and IT teams are working in silos, causing duplication and rework.
- The market is crowded with platforms that promise a lot but underdeliver on usability and flexibility.

As a result, there is a concerning gap growing between the demands placed on GRC teams and the actual resources allocated to their success. According to the 2024 ISACA state of Cybersecurity Report, staffing challenges are one of the biggest threats to an effective GRC program.

Since expanding headcount is unlikely, technology is the only way to fill this gap.

Why a Dedicated GRC Platform Is Essential

Despite being succinctly summarized into a neat acronym, GRC represents three distinct functions:

Governance: The system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled to ensure it achieves its objectives.

Risk: The process of managing uncertainty and addressing both threats and opportunities that impact an organization's ability to achieve its objectives.

Compliance: The organizational adherence to mandatory laws, regulations, and internal policies and ethical standards.

While these are individual functions within the organization, GRC responsibilities are very much interrelated. After all, an organization can’t demonstrate *compliance* with a regulatory requirement—whose function is to minimize a specific *risk*—if they don’t have sufficient controls and reporting mechanisms to *govern* access and usage.

Because of the interlocking nature of GRC operations, attempts to manage their priorities and workflows independently can cause significant problems. The resulting silos often lead to inefficiencies, blind spots and an inability to adapt to the complex, real-world business environment.

Instead, a more integrated approach is key to establishing a single, holistic view that enables better decision making and performance.

What Is a GRC platform?

A GRC platform is a solution that unifies an organization's policies, workflows, data and reporting that are necessary for managing governance, risk and compliance tasks.

Instead of treating GRC as three individual verticals, these tools provide a centralized location for executing on the organization's GRC strategies, as well as monitoring their progress. Through advanced functionality, such as automation and artificial intelligence (AI), GRC platforms increase efficiency and effectiveness.

A modern GRC platform is essential for achieving:

- **More cross-functional risk management,** where cyber, enterprise risk and operational teams converge.
- **Greater visibility for executives,** requiring platforms with powerful dashboards and reporting.
- **Increased integration with security tooling** as cyber governance becomes a core GRC use case.
- **A unified view of GRC** where all aspects of GRC (incident, risk, audit, BCDR, policy, third-party risk, compliance, regulatory change management and even data privacy) are incorporated in the GRC program.

Reasons Some GRC Leaders Are Reluctant to Implement a New GRC Solution

Suggestions to implement a new GRC platform are often met with skepticism. For those removed from the day-to-day realities of risk remediation and audit preparations, such as the C-suite and board members, GRC may appear manageable through spreadsheets, emails and ad-hoc processes. Below are the most common objections we hear from leaders and why those arguments tend to break down over time as complexity, scale and risk increase.

“We can manage everything in spreadsheets.”
The short answer is “No, you can’t.” This process collapses when teams grow, audits become more frequent, or evidence and ownership become too scattered. Spreadsheets cannot provide version control, real-time status reports and dashboarding nor enterprise-wide visibility.

“A GRC platform is too expensive.”
The price of inaction is higher. Compliance fines, audit delays and manual rework cost significantly more over time than a platform that centralizes and automates workflows.

“Implementation will take too long.”
Modern GRC platforms are far easier to stand up than in the past. Some providers offer dedicated implementation teams to help clients jumpstart their time-to-value. Others are so user-friendly that they don’t require IT involvement during implementation, reducing bottlenecks and delays. As a result, many organizations see value within weeks, not months, especially when they start with core use cases.

“It will be too rigid.”
Today’s leading platforms are highly configurable and scalable. They can flex with your processes instead of forcing you into a predetermined workflow.

“Our team won’t adopt it.”
Usability determines adoption. If the system is intuitive, configured well and reduces manual work, adoption follows naturally.

The Benefits of Implementing a Dedicated GRC Platform

Manual, fragmented processes that live in spreadsheets and email chains simply can’t keep up with GRC maturity demands. A modern GRC platform is the key to modernizing and optimizing your strategy.

The Benefits of Implementing a GRC Platform Include:

- Centralized risk, compliance, policy, third-party and audit data
- Improved visibility across teams, business units and systems
- Consistently enforced processes and accountability across the organization
- Reduced manual tasks and administrative burden
- A reliable audit trail that's both comprehensive and tamper-proof
- Improved reporting and informed decision-making
- Enhanced collaboration between risk, IT, compliance, audit and third parties
- Ability to scale as the organization grows and evolves
- Adaptability to regulatory changes
- AI-driven insights that teams cannot produce manually

However, not all GRC platforms are a fit for every organization. It’s important to understand what features and functionality are most important to your organization before selecting a solution.

Non-Negotiable GRC Platform Capabilities

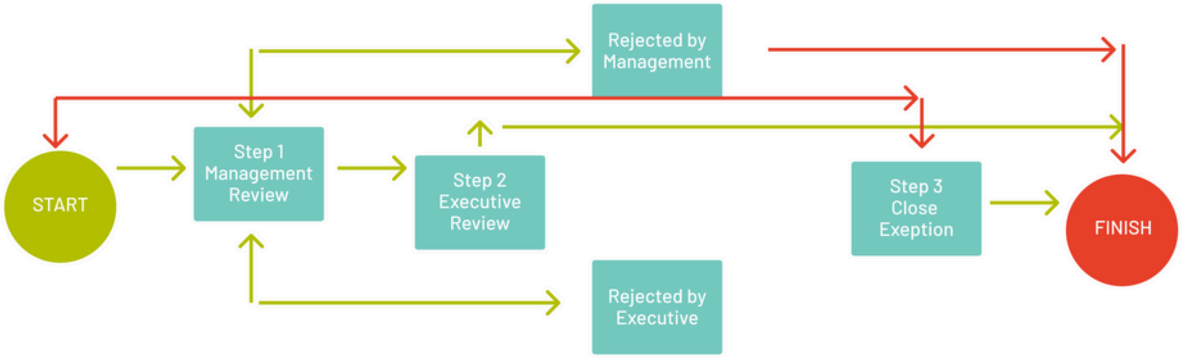
The 2025 Info-Tech Data Quadrant provides an excellent framework for evaluating GRC platforms, as well as an invaluable comparison of the top tools on the market. Below, we use a similar set of criteria to help you decide what features and capabilities are most important to your organization.

8 Core GRC Platform Capabilities:

#1 Configurable Workflows
You need automation that adapts to your processes, not the other way around. Perhaps equally as important, you need a tool that supports usability for technical and non-technical users. This way, your director of enterprise risk management, data protection officer, legal counsel and other stakeholders can function independently from the IT department's own timelines and priorities.

No-code or drag-and-drop builders are ideal for speed and versatility, allowing non-technical users to participate in the implementation. This minimizes overburdening the IT team and resulting bottlenecks.

Caution: Picking a "one-size-fits-all" tool that doesn't match your organization's needs. Sure, an out-of-the-box tool might be easier to implement, but that doesn't mean it can accommodate your organization's needs.



Onspring's drag-and-drop builder is designed to help GRC teams make workflows that work for them, fast.

#2 Flexible Data Modeling
No-code functionality also plays a large role in the initial rollout and adoption of a new GRC platform. IT teams are already over-burdened with their daily responsibilities, which can cause significant delays. When a GRC solution supports no-code configuration, non-technical resources can lead implementation without waiting for a break in IT's schedule. This also empowers users to design and refine workflows and dashboards to support their team's unique needs, rather than trying to translate them for someone in IT.

Caution: Regardless of what GRC tool you ultimately choose, you must still begin the process by defining clear, well-documented business requirements. If you don't know exactly what you need the platform to do (both today and in potential future scenarios), you risk choosing a suboptimal tool. And without clear requirements, it's impossible to effectively compare vendors or measure progress over time.

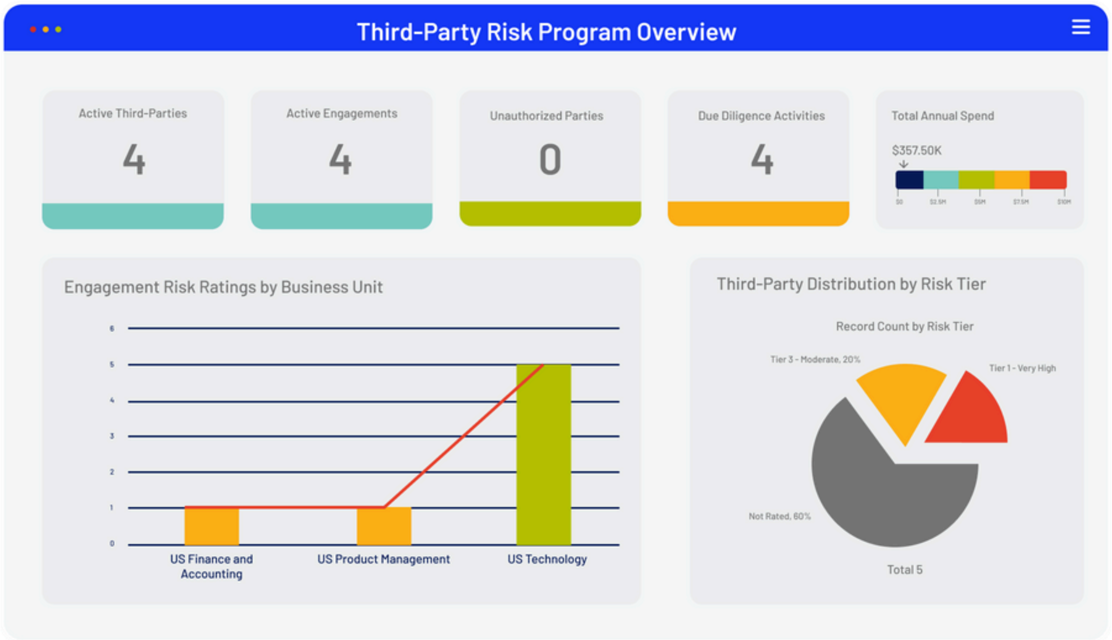
#3 Real-Time Dashboards and Reporting

Outdated insights or single-point-in-time snapshots are the bane of compliance efforts. After all, "Yes, we were compliant when we pulled this report two days ago at 10 AM," won't cut it with auditors. The rate of change—the speed at which data can be copied, manipulated or downloaded—is simply too fast. Too much can happen after you click export.

Executives also expect quick answers. They don't want to make high-impact decisions based on potentially outdated information. Your GRC platform should provide real-time dashboards and reporting.

In addition to having up-to-date data, your platform should also offer role-based dashboards (e.g., high-level insights for the board vs. a prioritized remediation list for IT). These relevant insights are a must-have for facilitating cross-departmental collaboration.

Caution: One of the greatest barriers to GRC success is a lack of cross-departmental buy-in or governance maturity. Dashboards that can provide relevant and real-time insights are invaluable to stakeholders across the organization and more likely to provide widespread adoption.



Onspring's dashboards offer both a high-level insights view to support decision-making at the board level and a highly detailed remediation list for IT teams and users to help prioritize the most crucial next steps.

#4 Evidence and Document Management

An important element to creating this centralized engine for all GRC initiatives is having a single location for storing, tracing and referencing supporting material. This ensures all stakeholders are functioning with a shared understanding of what sensitive data assets exist, where they are, how they're protected and who has access to them.

A GRC platform should automatically track changes to policies and controls, as well as pull evidence from other systems and tools (e.g., configuration logs), so you have everything you need when an audit rolls around.

Caution: If a tool doesn't properly handle evidence (documentation, audit trails, version history, proof of control), then it fails one of the core purposes of GRC. In some reported cases, auditors distrust the data in GRC systems because evidence is incomplete or poorly sourced. That undermines compliance credibility and may force manual workarounds anyway, defeating the purpose of the investment.

#5 Audit-Ready History and Traceability

Every change, owner and action should be recorded and easy to reference. Traceability is vital to passing an audit, but the gathered logs and workflow histories must also be tamper proof. By creating an immutable, single source of truth, GRC teams can rest assured that they are audit-ready.

Caution: This level of evidence gathering can be overwhelming during audits. A GRC platform must also offer filtering and summarization capabilities that allow users to precisely extract relevant data.

#6 Integration Capabilities

GRC doesn't live in a vacuum; risk, compliance, security, audit, third-party management, IT and HR all intersect. The ability to integrate with and assess the risk level associated with third-party tools is also important when determining your overall risk posture.

Your GRC platform should work with systems you already use, such as HRIS, ticketing, vulnerability scanners and identity tools. Ready-built APIs especially make these integrations much easier and more cost effective.

Caution: Poor integration with existing systems undermines attempts to automate and streamline processes. Instead, data must be manually extracted and uploaded from one system to the next, wasting time and introducing potential for errors.

#7 Strong Security and Access Controls

Data needs to be protected without limiting usability or hindering innovation. A GRC platform must facilitate the documentation of privacy, risk and security policies, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This granularity is necessary for determining access permissions and tracking all activity for enhanced traceability.

Caution: Weak access controls or broad permissions can make it difficult to manage unnecessary or malicious exposures, and create compliance gaps.

#8 Accurate, Context-driven AI

AI is revolutionizing how businesses run at all levels. In the GRC space, AI can be built into the platform to help generate records and content, gather insights from documents and support data integrity. Not only does this help streamline AI workflows, but it also ensures AI output is based on your unique business context, driving highly relevant and personalized results.

Generative AI can also be used to automate or streamline documentation generation, predictive thought completion, text field generation, intelligent document processing and more.

Caution: Carefully vet AI capabilities to ensure they're functional vs. vanity. In many cases, the AI offered by GRC platforms doesn't have the depth or contextual specificity to provide truly actionable insights. At best, it won't be useful. At worst, it can introduce errors, misinform decisions and compromise audit readiness.

Other Important Considerations When Evaluating GRC Platforms

Every organization has unique priorities, infrastructure and business models. The “right” GRC solution for one may be lacking for another. In addition to the non-negotiable capabilities listed above, here are other considerations you may want to add to your criteria.

- **AI-driven compliance monitoring** is quickly becoming the standard. Platforms need responsible AI and transparent data handling.
- **Demand for fast implementation timelines,** favoring platforms with configuration (no-code) over customization (requires hard-coding).
- **Increasing regulatory scrutiny and an explosion of state-specific legislation** across data privacy, incident management, third-party risk, sector-specific requirements, AI usage and more.
- **Heightened need for evidence management** due to more frequent audits and real-time regulator requests.
- **Scalability** of a platform, to keep pace as your business grows, merges or enters new markets. Non-scalable or inflexible tools can quickly become a bottleneck or risk.

States Are Cracking Down On Data Privacy and AI Usage

Twenty states, including California, Colorado and others, have enacted some form of a data privacy law.

AI usage was a hot topic this legislative season, with all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and some territories, such as Puerto Rico, introducing AI-specific legislation. 38 states went on to pass AI-specific measures.

Future-Proofing Your GRC Strategy with Onspring

Info-Tech Quadrant surveyed hundreds of professionals to understand how popular GRC platforms performed in the real world. Their responses were used to rank products within two main categories: **product features and satisfaction** and **vendor experience and capabilities.**

Onspring was honored to be the top solution on both counts, demonstrating how Onspring's GRC platform effectively walks the line between adaptability and usability. And with a wide array of product features designed to revolutionize how GRC responsibilities are managed, Onspring earned an overall 86% user satisfaction rating for its capabilities according to the Info-Tech report — two full percentage points higher than the closest competing platform.

This performance extended across individual evaluation areas as well. The platform's drag-and-drop functionality allows non-technical users to design processes that mirror real-world workflows. The tool easily adapts to the business's needs, not the other way around. Our 90% composite user satisfaction rating was the highest in the GRC category in the same Info-Tech report, demonstrating that the solution's tools, reporting and dashboards are intuitive and easy to use.

Setting the platform apart from others on the market, Onspring's recently released AI supports more intelligent automation, enabling users to establish processes that more effectively and automatically analyze documentation, assign tasks and provide remediation suggestions. Because the functionality is built directly into the platform, it facilitates enterprise-wide workflow automation, supporting all GRC functions.

To ensure you're set up for success, Onspring experts are available to help:

- Personalize your Onspring configurations to suit your needs
- Modify apps and surveys, tailor workflows, configure dashboards and set up messaging
- Import your data from and configure native data connectors

CTA: For more information, book a demo with an Onspring-certified consultant.

About Onspring

Onspring is an adaptive, integrated GRC platform built to connect processes, data and teams across the enterprise. With real-time visibility into risk posture, security controls and accountability measures, Onspring gives organizations a complete view of their governance, risk and compliance landscape. The platform is fully configurable, allowing users to create automations, unify workflows and scale their programs. Organizations across industries, from retail and insurance to healthcare and manufacturing, rely on Onspring to modernize GRC, moving from reactive checklists to connected, holistic oversight.

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