

Fictional exchange. Companies, people, operational inputs, interviews and reviews are invented. Updated 15 September 2026. Listed attachments are rendered pages in this PDF, not native downloadable files.

Board decision: launch in the US now or fix European delivery first?

FROM Elena Brantvik, CEO, OrchardQuill Systems GmbH <elena.brantvik@orchardquill.example>
TO IQ256 | iq256.com/contact
DATE 8 September 2025, 08:42 CEST

Hello IQ256,

We need a clear recommendation for our board vote. US pipeline is EUR 2.7M and competitors are moving, but European onboarding is strained, retention is below target, and the proposed launch adds 8 phased hires and EUR 2.1M of spending.

Please tell us whether to launch fully, repair Europe first, or choose another path. A hybrid is acceptable only if you define the spending limit, what we may do, what we must not do, and the exact evidence required before expansion.

Please include the strongest argument against your answer. Regards, Elena

ATTACHMENTS (4)

- **Board_Decision_Brief.pdf**
OrchardQuill Systems GmbH | Board vote 23 September 2025

01
- **Operating_Metrics_Aug_2025.xlsx**
Trailing 12 months to 31 August 2025

02
- **US_Pipeline_and_Budget.xlsx**
Qualified opportunities and 12-month launch request

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- **Leadership_Positions.docx**
Simulated stakeholder submissions to the fictional CEO

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Board decision brief: United States expansion

OrchardQuill Systems GmbH | Board vote 23 September 2025

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

Company snapshot

<div>EUR 12.4M</div> <div>ARR</div> <div>18% forecast growth</div>	<div>86</div> <div>Customers</div> <div>Industrial manufacturers</div>	<div>EUR 9.6M</div> <div>Cash</div> <div>About 32 months runway</div>
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OrchardQuill provides cloud software for supplier coordination, production exceptions, and factory handovers. It has 126 employees and serves European industrial manufacturers.

Two proposals before the board

Proposal	Commitment	Promised result	Main concern
Launch fully in the US	EUR 2.1M and 8 phased hires	EUR 2.6M US ARR in 12 months	Adds load to an already strained system
Repair Europe first	Freeze US hiring for one quarter	Faster onboarding and stronger retention	May lose a narrow market window

Why the decision is urgent

- Twelve qualified US opportunities represent EUR 2.70M unweighted ARR.
- Two prospects signed non-binding letters of intent.
- Competitors are staffing US operations.
- The 2026 financing story assumes US proof or European growth above 30%.
- Hiring must begin in October for a January launch.

Decision criteria

Criterion	Weight	Board question
Durable growth evidence	25%	Does the path create repeatable growth rather than attractive pipeline?
Customer outcomes	25%	Will customers reach value and renew?
Execution feasibility	20%	Can the present organization deliver it?
Cash resilience	20%	Does it preserve room for error and financing delays?
Option value	10%	Does it preserve choices if assumptions are wrong?

Non-negotiable constraints

- Do not let cash fall below EUR 3M in the base plan.
- Show a credible path to at least 15 months of committed runway after the first launch year.
- Do not depend on the next equity round; no term sheet is signed.
- Do not remove capacity from European strategic accounts.
- Do not create a second bespoke product for the US.

BOARD INSTRUCTION

Select a path, not merely more analysis. A staged answer must define spend, allowed work, forbidden work, and the exact evidence required for expansion.

Assignment scope

This fictional assignment is complete when the agreed review and documents are delivered and checked. Its business recommendations and future execution are separate from that completion.

Agreement	Boundary in this example
Delegated work	Review the supplied expansion and operating evidence, recommend a path, and prepare a budgeted execution plan with decision gates and customer-side owners.
Requested output	A growth review, 90-day operating plan and risk/gate register. This is an execution-plan sample; no US launch, customer recovery or operating program was carried out.
Completion checks	Reconcile pipeline weighting, cash/runway and budget; align day 0/day 90; retain hard gates, indicator rules, RED precedence and original caps.
Authority retained by customer	Elena and the board retain launch, hiring, spend and customer-contact decisions. The named executive roles are proposed fictional customer governance, not powers granted to IQ256.
Remaining checks	Verify real account-level capacity and outcomes, committed cash, paid partners, standard technical scope and comparable operating evidence.
Fee and timing	Agree the review scope, price and deadline before paid work. A defined implementation task may be quoted separately; this plan does not include running the company or the program.
Business budget	EUR 620k cash and 4.0 FTE are fictional program limits; EUR 2.1M is the rejected launch proposal. None is an IQ256 fee.

Where human input is agreed, IQ256 selects, briefs, coordinates and pays contributors. IQ256 integrates the agreed work and performs baseline completion checks. Extra verification answers a specified additional concern. External information packets require explicit customer approval; no approval is needed for every internal step within the agreed mandate.

If scope, price, deadline, sharing or customer effort changes materially, agree the next course before exceeding the mandate. A recommendation may name one option while the customer retains the decision; permission to act or commit money is agreed separately.

Discuss a defined assignment

<https://iq256.com/contact>

Start with a short, non-confidential description. Initial human reply normally within 2-48 hours, distinct from the agreed delivery deadline.

Operating metrics

Trailing 12 months to 31 August 2025

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

Company KPIs

KPI	Current	Target	12 months ago	Status
ARR growth	18%	30%	44%	Below plan
Gross retention	84%	92%	88%	Action
Net retention	97%	110%	103%	Action
Gross margin	73%	78%	76%	Action
Contract to first value	93 days	35 days	61 days	Action
Live by day 60	36%	80%	58%	Action
Implementation backlog	14 weeks	4 weeks	7 weeks	Action
Bespoke scope in new deals	43%	15%	24%	Action

OBSERVED LOSS

Of EUR 1.92M ARR lost in 12 months, 61% came from customers that reached first value after day 90 or never reached it.

Sources: billing export, implementation tracker, CRM, product analytics, and support system.
Prepared by Finance and Operations.

Operating_Metrics_Aug_2025.xlsx

Activation cohorts

Time to first value	Customers	12-month NRR	Renewed	Average implementation hours
45 days or less	18	112%	17 of 18	188
46-90 days	23	104%	20 of 23	272
91-120 days	31	89%	22 of 31	416
Not live by day 120	14	71%	7 of 14	529

Where capacity goes

Work	Share of hours	Cause
ERP and master-data mapping	33%	Customer-specific mappings
Data cleanup	22%	Quality discovered after signature
Process redesign	18%	No accountable customer owner
Custom reports	15%	Sales commitment bypasses product review
Training	12%	No standard role-based path

- Implementation leads are at 150% of capacity; integration engineers at 140%.
- Sales commission is paid entirely at signature.
- Twenty-three integration variants are supported; eight exist for one customer each.
- No executive owns contract-to-first-value across functions.

US pipeline and budget

Qualified opportunities and 12-month launch request

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

US pipeline

Prospect	Potential ARR	Probability	Stage	Material condition
CopperHeron Mobility	EUR 420k	55%	Letter of intent	Oracle integration, support, security
JuniperTern Manufacturing	EUR 310k	60%	Letter of intent	Paid design partnership possible
LarchVector Components	EUR 260k	35%	Security review	North American hosting answer
CobaltMeadow Motion	EUR 230k	45%	Workshop	Standard SAP connector may fit
GraniteKite Systems	EUR 180k	20%	Discovery	Export-control review
3 other workshop accounts	EUR 650k	35%	Workshop	Requirements partly overlap
4 other discovery accounts	EUR 650k	15%	Discovery	No common requirements confirmed

<div>EUR 2.70M</div> <div>Unweighted</div> <div>12 opportunities</div>	<div>EUR 0.97M</div> <div>Weighted</div> <div>Sales probabilities</div>	<div>EUR 2.10M</div> <div>Launch spend</div> <div>8 phased hires + support</div>
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Finance scenarios

Scenario	US ARR after 12 months	Cash used	Ending monthly burn	Key assumption
Downside	EUR 0.8M	EUR 2.1M	EUR 450k	Long procurement and custom work
Base	EUR 1.4M	EUR 2.1M	EUR 450k	Three large and four smaller wins
Sales plan	EUR 2.6M	EUR 2.1M	EUR 450k	Fast hiring and 45% close rate

CRITICAL DEPENDENCY

Base and sales cases assume OrchardQuill raises at least EUR 8M within nine months. No financing is committed.

Leadership positions

Simulated stakeholder submissions to the fictional CEO

Fictional inputs. Benchmarks, interviews and voices are invented.

Simulated voice: CRO: The first two letters were inbound. If we delay, the strongest candidates and the best prospects may join competitors.

Simulated voice: COO: The US plan copies our most overloaded process and adds time zones, security work, and integrations. We are short of repeatable activation, not demand.

Simulated voice: CTO: The product can serve the US only if the first segment uses our standard SAP path. We cannot add a hosting stack and one-off integrations.

Simulated voice: CFO: A letter of intent is not cash and weighted pipeline is not runway. Separate market proof from organizational commitment.

Simulated voice: Board Chair: Preserve the US window without pretending the operational problem will solve itself.

CEO's request

Define a decision that preserves real US learning, protects core customers, and can be reversed before an uncommitted financing round becomes a survival dependency.