

Obstacles To Project Success

To assist you with the successful implementation of your business management software system, we have identified below a number of key areas you need to consider. The most common cause of project failure is the lack of management or staff buy-in, not the failure of the software system itself. The points below will help you avoid such a situation.

1.1) Software Systems As A Part-Time Project

A new software solution is a major undertaking, requiring the full-time assignment of capable employees for the duration of the project.

1.2) Senior Executive Support

IT strategy must come from the top. Software systems can be an all-encompassing strategy, and no one department, call centre or information technology (IT) manager can drive the cross-functional process changes required. Receiving buy-in from senior management is essential - it is a key requirement for the IT Project to be successful.

1.3) Project Champion

Essential for the IT project to be a successful one will be for the organisation to appoint a Project Champion who would be the 'day to day' project controller. It is essential for the Project Champion to have senior executive support.

1.4) Business Case

It is essential to develop an IT Business Case that clearly indicates budgets and business benefits, whether tangible or intangible.

1.5) Adequate Hardware Infrastructure

Slow hardware response times can result in users becoming despondent with the software and may result in non-usage. This is why Steam Software web based systems are recommended.

1.6) Inadequate Budgets

Implementing an IT Solution as cheaply as possible is a mistake companies come to regret. Taking a low-cost approach to software can result in the wrong selection.

1.7) Communicate The Benefits Of The Project

1.8) It is essential that the benefits of the project be explained to the most progressive management and staff. Such an approach should overcome any potential cultural obstacles. A corporate culture averse to adopting the IT System will ensure project failure.

Involve All Appropriate Departments

Effective software implementations include information from all relevant departments in the analytical process. Internal departments often retain traditional boundaries and can be reluctant to share information. Get users involved in the system specification. Users must be involved in the selection process or at least consulted. If not, when the solution is delivered, it often creates resentment by users with the opinion that the software has been forced upon them. The user is key to the success of the project. They know where the inefficiencies lie in their current processes and are often best placed to know how these processes can be improved.

1.9) Data Integrity

Companies do not always see data quality as an important consideration in software projects. By failing to recognise that data audits are a vital step in any implementation strategy, companies are risking the success of the software.

1.10) Integration With Back Office Systems

Companies that purchase IT solutions that are not flexible, scalable and that cannot integrate with their ERP and/or Accounting Systems will ultimately be unable to respond to competitive pressures and will fail. Ensure your chosen system integrates smoothly.

1.11) Training

Adequate software and business process training must support software implementation for all employees. By not undertaking adequate training, utilisation of the system will be inadequate and may lead to the software benefits being unfulfilled.

1.12) Determine The Functions That Should Be Automated

In pursuit of automation, many organisations automate inefficient processes that often result in an automated inefficient process! See also our notes under consultancy on www.steam-software.co.uk/services/consultancy For example, a company uses a spreadsheet instead of their existing paper based weekly visit report. The spreadsheet still requires manual completion. The success of your software solution depends on the identification of the processes that can be effectively automated.

1.13) Have Clearly Defined Aims And Objectives

Too many companies focus solely on the 'nice' features of the new solution. Look ahead to a potential quarterly review meeting and ask yourself 'Has there been an increase in sales revenues and by how much?' Are we now responding to every enquiry within 24 hours? Without clearly defined and measurable objectives, benefits might be gained but cannot be quantified.

1.14) Build A Measurable Financial Justification

Be able to measure the financial success of an IT project. Interested in increasing your sales conversion rates? If so, by how much? By defining measurable financial benefits at the beginning of the project you not only justify the initial investment but you can also analyse future performance.

1.15) Hold Regular Reviews With Your Supplier

The supplier can help you identify inefficiencies in your IT procedures. Holding regular meetings with the supplier enables them to advise you of these inefficiencies and possibly suggest improved working practices. These meetings are also useful for reviewing the results of actions established in previous review meetings or post implementation aims & objectives. Companies implementing IT solutions, if approached inappropriately, can find themselves faced with certain hurdles that may prove detrimental to the overall business benefits received following software implementation. Using common business practice of planning, however, can ensure that these obstacles are removed.