Tips for a Successful ERP Implementation

1. Develop a solid **project charter** statement. Clearly define the goals of the project. Post the statement prominently and always refer back to it when the going gets tough.
2. Ensure that you have **executive sponsorship** for the project. It must be the TOP priority, as the new system will be the foundation for your company's future growth. The executive steering committee should be briefed throughout the project. The executive committee will also serve as a conduit among all major stakeholders, as roles and missions of the organization may need to change to align with the project charter.
3. Put together the **right team**. The 'right team' means putting the people on the project that you want to lead company-wide change. Stay away from project members that you know are anti-change. Instead, rely on your very best people, those that you are looking to take your company to the next level. You cannot put the second team on the job and expect great results.
4. Equally important is ensuring that the project team has the proper time to commit to the project. This can be painful as you will need to backfill to free up time for your **team members dedicated to the project**.
5. Management must **incentivize project team** members. Putting in place a new system is a long and arduous task and incentives will help promote success and ensure all team members put forth their very best effort.
6. **Managing expectations** is integral to success. ERP implementation is a journey and, as a journey, never complete. On initial operating capability, you will still have areas that need further enhancement and even some processes that may not be as efficient on day one.
7. Put together a detailed project plan that clearly shows all major milestones and deliverables. Revise the plan only if absolutely necessary—revisions will indicate to the team members that delays are acceptable. The best ERP implementations **stick to the** original **project plan**, go live on time and fine tune after.
8. Conduct a detailed business process review to document current process flows and clearly **define the "to-be" condition**.
9. Create a facility plan to support the Conference Room pilot activities, similar to what you might use for a major proposal. This **dedicated work space** will allow your team to focus on the project and also remove the tendencies of addressing the day-to-day issues of their regular jobs. This also promotes cross functional coordination and cooperation, as well as camaraderie.
10. Set a schedule where the project team must support the **CRP** [e.g., Tues – Friday 1PM – close of business]. Clearly communicate to all that these **timeframes** are **blocked out** for all project team members and NO exceptions are allowed.

11. **Constantly evaluate risks**, constraints and assumptions. Acceptable risk is OK. Moving to a new system will always have its challenges. Maintain a gap and gap mitigation list.
12. **Celebrate along the way.** For example, upon achieving critical milestones, take the team out to eat, or provide some sort of incentive. Celebrate small wins along the journey.
13. **Keep the CRP team in place post-initial operating capability**. As stated earlier, you will not have the ENTIRE configuration optimized at the start of the IOC. Keeping the team intact will ensure you have resources needed to fine tune/polish the IOC configuration.
14. **Promote the project** throughout the company by continually reminding everyone that it is the top priority. Have a countdown board that is visible throughout the plant. For example: "**60 days to ERP Launch"**
15. **Identify any bottlenecks** in your sub-process teams and take quick measures. For example, if the procurement team is falling behind the finance and project management teams, identify this early and implement corrective actions. In an ERP implementation, the overall schedule is subject to the weakest link in your sub-teams. Don't let one team hold up the entire project.
16. Make sure you have the **right hardware** to support the system. The hardware should be in place to ensure that the system performance is acceptable. Factor error on the conservative side.
17. Put together a **great training and education program** for all proposed ERP users, again managing their expectations. Promote the new system during training. Keep everyone excited.
18. Hold the functional sub-teams responsible for accurate data conversion. Don't treat this as an IT task. The **data conversion must convert clean and reliable data** as this will be a huge must for end-user acceptance. Don't under-estimate this task.