Tips for a successful ERP implementation

By:
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PROJECT CHARTER

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.

EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP

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.

RIGHT TEAM

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.

TEAM MEMBERS DEDICATION

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.

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DEDICATED WORKSPACE

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.

INCENTIVIZE PROJECT TEAM

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.

CONFERENCE ROOM PILOT

The CRP is critical to the success of your implementation. This is where you test your business processes as configured based on your functional requirements, and gain an understanding of how the ERP system will impact the operation of the business. Create a facility plan to support your CRP activities. 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 time frames are blocked out for all project team members and NO exceptions are allowed.

STICK TO THE PLAN

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.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

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.

CONSTANTLY EVALUATE RISK

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.

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CELEBRATE ALONG THE WAY

Upon achieving critical milestones, take the team out to eat, or provide some sort of incentive. Celebrate small wins along the journey, and make people feel appreciated for all of their hard work.

PROMOTE THE PROJECT

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

IDENTIFY ANY BOTTLENECKS

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.

STANDARDIZE VS. CUSTOMIZE

Many businesses will lean towards keeping traditional business processes in place, and customizing the software in order to operate in a similar manner. However, ERP systems were designed to create efficiencies, and likely use standard practices applied across different industries to create the most effective processes. Make sure the case for a software customization is proven out against the cost and time it will take to implement, as well as the ability to support it long term. Sometimes keeping it simple is best.

CLEAN AND RELIABLE DATA

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.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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.

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