## How to Fail at Implementing a Business System

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Implementing a business system is a daunting task for the entire organization and will be a major cost item for the year. Whether you are implementing a whole new system or re-implementing parts of an existing system, there are many ways to fail in the effort. Although there are numerous details that must be attended to, any of which can derail the effort, some of the major ways to fail include:

**Don't fully understand your requirements prior to making the selection of a system**. Without a detailed list of required features and functions, the system being considered cannot be properly evaluated and any request-for-quote from a vendor will only be a best guess as to what it needs to do and how it meets the needs of the company.

**Don't pay attention to the business processes of the entire organization.** Not understanding and documenting the business processes will mean that no improvements to the way business is done will be explored so that requirements that help these changes are also not known. Without this understanding, assumptions will be made that may or may not be right.

**Choose a system because it was successfully used by someone else**. Every company has its own set of requirements and to select a system based on the fact that a friend, colleague or another company in the industry has been successful does not mean that you will be successful.

**Choose a system because of how it looks**. Although the user interface to the system is important, it is more important that the system does what you need it to do. Also, seeing the system simply via a demo conducted by the vendor can mask issues you may struggle with when you go to use it yourself.

**Don't educate and train those who will be using the system**. Without training, users will not know how to do what they need to do and without education, they will not understand why they are having to do this. Training also needs to include plenty of practice time with real transactions so that the go-live experience delivers fewer surprises.

**Don't accept (or manage) the fact that major organizational change is about to occur.** Either change WILL occur or the new system will simply replicate the sins of the old. Much of the change comes from the fact that the business processes need to change and these changes need to be addressed and managed proactively.

**Overload those involved with project activities while expecting them to perform all of their regular job duties.** If both project work and regular job activities cannot be done, the project activities will be sacrificed.

**Implement a system without thorough testing of the software AND business processes**. Many users assume the software will work as advertised (not an unreasonable expectation) but it often times has

problems you would not expect. More importantly, testing the way the business will be run using this tool must be done to be sure that the business can continue once the system is implemented.

**Implement everything all at once without considering a modular approach.** So much is at stake with the "Big Bang" approach that any slip in the implementation can be disastrous. May of the problems will not become evident until later when accounting and finance try to piece together all that has happened through the new system. This all-or-nothing approach typically "bets the company" on being successful.

**Attempt implementation without the assistance of an unbiased expert who has done it before**. Without the knowledge of experience or a proven methodology, many points will be missed and mistakes will be made that could easily be avoided. Using only the software vendor is risky too since their goal will be to make your company work in the software rather than make the software work in your company.

It is most important that you get this implementation right. It is your system and you need to live with the results. You need to understand the current requirements, the business processes and what needs to change and what you want from the business in the future. If you are unsure of how to proceed successfully on your own with experts from within, be sure to contact an experienced consultant that is not tied to any software solution or system. Implementing an business system is a very costly proposition but it is even more costly the second or third time around.