

Ten Tips for a Successful Implementation

White paper

Tip #1. Have a Game Plan

One of the most frequent mistakes companies make is to schedule too little time to implement their Enterprise Resource Planning system. While it is a good thing to have a positive attitude so you'll stick to your plan and achieve your goals; don't let those rose-colored glasses cloud your clear vision. Be a realist throughout your planning stage and schedule enough time so your team can meet expectations. You'll save yourself and your employees a lot of frustration and disappointment.

When creating your implementation plan, be sure to break the project down into manageable chunks. Divide the project into key stages and then divide each stage further into steps. Since each part of the process requires the successful completion of the previous one, you need to be systematic about tackling each segment. This is another reason that an overly optimistic deadline can be harmful; it will force you to start successive stages of the process before your team has properly finished the previous ones.

Lastly, be sure to give your team enough time to review, discuss, comment upon, and accept the implementation analysis that will be provided to you. This first stage in the process is a lengthy document that analyzes the way your company operates and suggested ways to configure the new ERP system so that your company performs more effectively. The system provider will give you their deadlines for the key deliverables they will be providing to you, but don't forget to give yourself some time to consider these items and to ask questions.

Tip #2. Oh Captain, my Captain

Okay, now you've established a realistic timetable and sound plan, but every ship needs her captain and the same is true for the

S.S. Implementation. A smooth and efficient implementation requires the close partnership of two teams: the consultants and the users - and these teams need a project leader to



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steer the ship and guide their work. Your team leader will serve to reconcile your departments' competing needs and to supervise the process.

It is of vital importance that the leader devotes all their time to the implementation until it is complete. A captain of the sea wouldn't serve as the tailor or the cobbler in addition to their responsibilities leading the crew and the same should be true of your project captain. The leader who is running around resolving parallel tasks unrelated to the implementation, with his or her mobile phone constantly ringing, will complete none of the tasks satisfactorily or on time. This means that the project and the people involved – both the consultants and your employees – will suffer. A captain who is 100% focused on the project will work more effectively and have a positive effect on the implementation process.

Tip #3. Know Your Destination

*"Which road do I take?" - asked Alice.
"Where do you want to go?" asked the cat.
"I don't know," Alice answered.
"Then", said the cat, "It doesn't matter."*

One can only hope that Alice in Wonderland is not the CEO of a company that is about to implement an ERP system. Choosing this class of software, while providing many benefits, involves a significant monetary investment, heavy time commitment from the employees and the management board, and often profound organizational changes.

In order to make long-term improvements to your company, you need to identify and quantify your goals precisely. You should assign concrete percentages and dollar amounts to a list of your goals.

For example:

- Reduce the time required to perform specific tasks (%)
- Reduce customer complaints (%)
- Save cash resources by improving inventory management (in \$)

Remember: the more closely the requirements are defined, the more likely you will choose the appropriate solutions. Of course, you are not alone when prioritizing and working through your goals – you can count on a team of consultants who have many years of experience working with other companies and who will help you identify growth opportunities.



Tip #4. Measure the results

We've discussed the need to break your project down into stages and steps. Before you move onto each next step or stage in the implementation process you should be sure that everything leading up to it is performing as it should. How?

It is good practice to hold regular project audits so that any errors or anomalies can be detected early. This will allow you to rectify matters in time. The audit allows you to compare the real status of the project against your timetable. If something is not running on schedule, you can refer to the exact steps or stages to discover where the delay occurred and to decipher the reason.

Once every two or three weeks, organize a meeting between your management team and your ERP provider's team, including the project leader to analyze any hiccups in the process. This will help you avoid wasting time and energy on the "blame game." More often than not, any delays can be attributed to both sides.

Tip #5. Ask Joe in the Warehouse

What has Joe in the warehouse got to do with the implementation? A lot, it turns out. All changes can provoke feelings of uncertainty

and a sense of threat among employees. Since it is the rank and file employees from accounts, the warehouse, or the sales teams that make up the majority of the system's users, it is important that during the pre-implementation analysis stage you take very careful notice of what Joe in the warehouse has to say.

From experience, implementation consultants know that quite often managers are not fully aware of the small, but sometimes very counter-productive problems their employees encounter in their routine work. In this situation, it is vital to have the assistance of an experienced consultant who can recognize the problems and needs of your employees. Keep in mind; you are implementing your new IT system to serve your employees, not vice versa!

In addition, implementation debriefings with companies that have used Comarch ALTUM tell us that close cooperation with employees at the analysis stage have resulted in post-deployment gains in efficiency of a few percent above their targeted improvements. It is this three or four percent that could help your company win the race against your competition.



Tip #6. It takes Two to Tango

As with the complex and dramatic dance, implementing an IT system needs the engagement, commitment, and close cooperation of two partners: the implementation consultant and your company's management team. If your management team is not determined and involved, even the best software technology and the most enthusiastic consultants will not help. The absence of strong support from senior decision-makers may mean that the atmosphere gets a little too relaxed and people lose heart - your employees could start avoiding the implementation work and focus on other tasks.

Here are the keys to successful implementation that your management team needs to deliver:

- Strong leadership
- The right team management
- Complete and timely information provided to consultants
- Rapid reaction to problems as they arise

Having key managers engaged in the process can also improve the relationship between the consultants and your employees. Don't forget, that an atmosphere that welcomes change is one that has been carefully nurtured over a number of years by building the trust of employees in the people who manage the company.

Tip #7. The Correct Training

In the experience of ERP consultants, it is a good idea to carefully train key employees in the early stages of implementation. Key employees are those who will be assigned high authorization levels and those who will become administrators responsible for changing settings and editing documents. These employees will also be in direct contact with the supplier when new functionality is added.

Your key users should be identified in the earliest stages of your planning. This will encourage them to connect with the project and help the consultants get a better idea of your company's needs. Before implementation begins, key employees need



to be trained on how the new system will work. Doing so ensures that during the implementation work these employees will be able to monitor whether the project is being implemented as agreed.

An added benefit of training these key players early is that they can pass their knowledge on to other employees, allowing training to be conducted internally. This benefits both the consultant and your company because it means the consultants can concentrate on the implementation, while you can reduce your training costs. Conducting training internally can also help build employee trust in and enthusiasm for the new system, since they will have been trained by their colleagues at work instead of outsiders.

Tip #8. Get the Players Involved

It is no secret that even the best efforts of a team of consultants can meet the resistance of employees who are unwilling to change. It is essential to convince your employees that the new system will benefit all users. Your management team and consultants should regularly emphasize the advantages and benefits of introducing the system. Do not underestimate the power senior decision-makers have in convincing employees that

what is good for the company can also be good for the employees.

You may ask, however, how your employees will react to having additional responsibilities thrust onto their plates. What happens when satisfaction in a successfully completed project and in newly acquired skills is not enough? After all, implementing an ERP system requires a lot of time and effort from employees and brings with it new tasks to perform. In this case, you may consider employing additional methods of motivating employees, such as bonuses. Your employees will then take on the new duties willingly and with greater enthusiasm instead of putting them off until later.

Tip #9. Tame the changes

In the process of implementing an ERP system, your company will go through organizational changes, with some employees receiving new roles and responsibilities. These changes can provoke considerable resistance. You should give these issues and fears sufficient attention. How? The answer is effective change management to ease the path through the period of upheaval involved in implementation.



Tip #10. Think about the future

OK, let's face it – you are not a meteorologist and forecasting the weather may not be your forté, but you should attempt to predict the future needs of your company. Implementation is only the beginning of the adventure with your new the ERP system. A well chosen system will, with time, become the pillar of your company's operations. It will set the standards and epitomize the best business practices. In order for this is to happen, though, you need to choose an option that will not only suffice for the time being, but which will have the potential to accommodate the various potential growth paths your company has as it evolves.

Choosing an option that works for now, but does not allow for growth may seem cheaper, but when you factor in the amount you'll eventually spend to extend the system and make changes to functionality; you'll end up paying more for this temporary solution than for a system that can grow with you. Think ahead and consider the system's flexibility. Ask about the possibilities of extending functionality and the costs of additional licenses.

Comarch ALTUM is fully prepared for the growth of your company. We will help you to plan not only system extensions as the company grows, but we will also advise on how the system can be used to stimulate and achieve this growth.

