3 Things Every CIO Wants in a Successful Software Implementation



The modern global economy is fast-paced, highly competitive, and driven by data.

It's made the art of doing business more complex than ever before, but it's also made it possible for small businesses to compete effectively with their larger corporate peers by taking advantage of the power and versatility offered by advanced software solutions and digital tools supported by growing or even brand new technologies.

And whether you're updating your existing systems or adding new business processes in tandem with a new software system, it makes good sense to coordinate with your Chief Information Officer (CIO) and IT team to ensure it's a success.

Blending project management with both business process optimization and effective change management, the software implementation process requires careful planning and execution.

You can give your company a head start on the road to a successful software

implementation by making sure your plan incorporates a few tried and true essentials.

A Successful Software Implementation Begins with a Plan

Taking a trip without a roadmap—whether it's a scrap of parchment, an atlas, or an app on your smartphone—might make for a good movie, but it's a terrible approach to project management.

The implementation process can be complex, time-consuming, and costly; in fact, a 2016 report by McKinsey and Company found 70% of large-scale transformation programs fail to hit the targets they've set.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of an effective and well-developed software implementation plan.

And part of crafting such a plan is making sure it includes a few "must-haves" that help implementation team members educate and engage end users throughout the entire organization to ensure they understand and comply with the new system.

> *Whatever the reason, and whatever the type, platform, and scale of your implementation project (which is, at its core, a software project), you need to be confident your business requirements and goals are met, your entire team is on board with the new processes, and you've got the right tools for the task at hand.*

Three Essential Components of a Successful Software Implementation

Maybe you're replacing your outdated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

Maybe you're integrating a vendor management solution. Or maybe you've decided to optimize your procurement function by implementing a comprehensive

procure-to-pay solution like PLANERGY.

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Let's consider three of the most important components necessary for a successful software implementation:

An Implementation Team—Led by a Project Manager

Regardless of implementation methodology, updating an existing software system or creating a new one starts with assembling a crack team that's ready to build a roadmap to success.

Ideally, your implementation team will have:

- The project management and planning skills required to set realistic goals and benchmarks.
- Members drawn from finance, information technology, and any other areas where subject matter expertise can provide essential guidance.
- Strong leadership from a veteran project manager.
- A collaborative, inclusive approach, working with software vendors and all the end users within your organization to establish business requirements (including budgeting), identify potential roadblocks to adoption, and set the metrics they'll use throughout the implementation process, from roadmap to roll out.

A Clear Implementation Plan—with Measurable Goals

Louis Pasteur once said, "Chance favors only the prepared mind."

Assembling your implementation team is the first step; the next is mapping out an implementation plan. In drawing up your project plan, carefully consider these questions:

- What is the scope of this implementation project? Does it impact the entire organization? A single department?
- What's the timeline for the implementation process? Set weekly goals and provide contingencies to address delays.
- What digital tools will be required? Off-the-shelf enterprise software? A purpose-made software solution? A completely new application that requires software development?
- How will progress be measured and obstacles resolved? What key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used to do so?
- Will additional software tools be required to support late-stage implementation, such as webinars, training sessions, and direct support for end users before, during, and after kick-off?
- How will stakeholders and end users be kept apprised of the progress? Will regular update sessions be required? What form should these sessions take?
- What opportunities can be leveraged with this implementation to support and simplify future software implementation projects?

Top-Notch Technologies—with Comprehensive Support

Successful software implementations are about more than simply clicking "install" and sending out an email or two.

In a business environment where new software is part of larger change management and business process optimization initiatives, organizations often need to invest as much time and resources into education and engagement as they do the software itself.

When it comes to the "nuts and bolts" of implementation, make sure your plan includes:

- A fully functional preview of the software for the implementation team, the CIO and all senior management.
- Dedicated "application masters" from within the implementation team with significant time invested in mastering the software to provide guidance and answer questions during implementation.
- Comprehensive education and training at all stages of the

implementation, including refreshers where necessary and periodic evaluations to measure compliance and efficiency.

- Corporate culture management. Ensure your entire team is up to date on *why* and *how* these improvements help the business succeed in addition to the necessary changes to their everyday workflows.
- A partnership approach between IT, the software vendor(s), and all other stakeholders to minimize miscommunication and ensure a smooth transition.
- Collaborative and consultative support from your software vendor. Look for providers offering training sessions, demonstrations, webinars, and other tools needed to ensure total buy-in from stakeholders and end users at all levels.
- Digital technologies that support long-term gains to efficiency, profitability, and competitive strength. A versatile, built-to-purpose solution such as PLANERGY, for example, provides artificial intelligence, process automation, and data analysis tools across multiple, customizable modules.

  These same tools can be used to introduce automation, continuous improvement, and other digital transformation improvements across business units as budget and planning allow. In addition, opting for cloud-based, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions reduce the need for local, on-premises hardware, software, and support—and their associated expenses and risks.

Ready for a Successful Software Implementation?

Growing pains can be tough on any business.

Learning new technologies, adapting to new business processes, and navigating the associated corporate cultural changes can be a real challenge.

But by taking the time to develop a proactive software implementation process based on a thorough project plan, you can be sure your entire organization is ready to roll out on the road to a successful, and CIO-approved, implementation.

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