



Pro-Cloud[®]



TCES Community[®]



BlueLight[®]

Powered by Pro-Cloud

ASSET TRAINING
MANAGEMENT
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
BUSINESS SERVICES SUPPORT
CONSULTANCY
CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS
HOSTING
DATA
SECURITY
DEVELOPMENT
HELP
DESK
AUTOMATE EVERYTHING



FM652644

9 MISTAKES TO AVOID A FAILED SOFTWARE IMPLEMENTATION



Introduction

Implementing a new software solution can be a complex, time consuming and expensive task for a business to undertake. With potential delays and costly consequences lurking around every corner project failure can be an unfortunate outcome for many organisations undertaking such a change if not managed correctly.

This document designed by our implementation personnel through past experience helps avoid the pitfalls by highlighting them before any investment either in money or time has been made.

This document forms part of our commitment to ensure a successful, efficient, on-time and holistic installation of our software solutions which will benefit your business for many years to come.

Fortunately, failure is avoidable

The cultural, financial and day-to day management of the organisation is at stake, so it is important that all possible steps are taken to avoid or minimize risk and make the implementation process as smooth and rewarding as possible.

We want to make it work, we want your business to absorb our new software quickly and successfully so here we highlight the 9 possible mistakes and the steps you can take to overcome these challenges.

Mistake No.1:

Lack of Sufficient Planning



Sometimes software implementations fail before they even start.

Before the implementation takes place, many companies face the dilemma of whether they should change their current system completely for the whole software solution or upgrade to software modules. Organisations unhappy with their current systems become convinced that the problem lies in their software's reporting, integration and other inefficiencies, where a simpler and more cost-effective upgrade may do the trick

Many organisations that do decide to undergo a business change project - don't do enough planning before they begin implementing a new solution. This can lead to confusion in the future when current processes aren't fully understood and can become a barrier to growth and improved efficiency.

How to mitigate the risks?

Conduct an Internal Audit

Before attempting to implement our software solution, it's worth bringing together a team of people across the business to conduct an internal audit of all your systems and business processes. If you don't have the experience in-house, it's worth considering investing in one of our consultants who has experience in your industry.

Outline a Clear Set of Goals

Manage expectations. Once the decision has been made to implement our software, the first step is to have a clear definition of what success is. Gaining a clear consensus here is vital - It's important to gain a collective view of the problems that need to be solved, the outcome, the financial implications and justification behind the project. This should help reign in the costs when trying to control the scope. Having a defined set of goals makes it easier to narrow down the business of processes involved from day one. Without a clear vision of success, the end point will become a moving target.

The Devil is in the Detail

We're probably stating the obvious when we say a detailed plan is an essential part of a successful implementation. However, more often than not, the plan is unrealistic, and not detailed enough. To be a strong plan, it needs to outline all requirements and people involved. It should have enough detail that a knowledgeable person can look at the plan and visualise the scope of work. It should allocate enough time, usually in blocks of a few days / weeks at a time.

Until you have a plan, you won't really know the impact on the project in terms of time, and additional cost and resource needed to work on the project. Or indeed an accurate reflection of when you will go live. As part of your software solution implementation your integrator and project manager will provide your organisation with a cradle to grave project plan.

Mistake No.2:

Not Getting Everyone on Board



Before our software solutions get underway, it's vital to ensure that the entire organisation "from the top-down" understand the reasons, need and strategy behind a business change project.

If the key decision makers don't articulate this need for change it can have a negative impact on both your budget and internal resources. Not only this, but end-users may become resistant to change, won't place the required priority on the project or provide the necessary commitment to ensure the project is a success.

How to mitigate the risks?

Articulate the Need for Change

It's important to develop a clear picture of how the organisation will benefit from the new system. By articulating the need for change, and what will happen if you don't this, should all go a long way in getting buy-in across the organisation.

Key sponsors of the project should help promote the idea and pass the message down to end-users in order to gain the necessary enthusiasm, motivation and energy needed to kick-start the project.

Mistake No.3:

Carrying Out Excessive Customisation

Most companies looking to implement our software system understand that excessive customisation adds risk, time and unnecessary cost to a project. According to Gartner, PwC and Deloitte, customisation is one of the main areas of technical risk within an IT implementation. This being said, very few enterprise-level implementations have no customisations.

How to mitigate the risks?

Experience is Key

It's important to work with a company that have proven experience implementing our software solutions, your platform of choice. They should have complete understanding of the features/functionality available to enable you to automate as many business processes as possible. By limiting the amount of customisations before go-live you can keep costs down and improve efficiency. On-going maintenance, future upgrades and meeting your core objectives are also more likely to succeed if you keep the amount of custom work to a minimum.

Fit and Function

Choose a solution that (in its vanilla state) meets 80-90% of your business needs. You'll need a solution that is flexible enough to be modified, therefore leaving 10% for business critical gaps / custom modifications.

For any non-business critical changes that may need to happen post go-live, it's helpful to have a checklist of what you requested in your RFI versus the features and functionality you have gone live with. This list will be helpful when auditing, training and writing test scripts.



Mistake No.4:

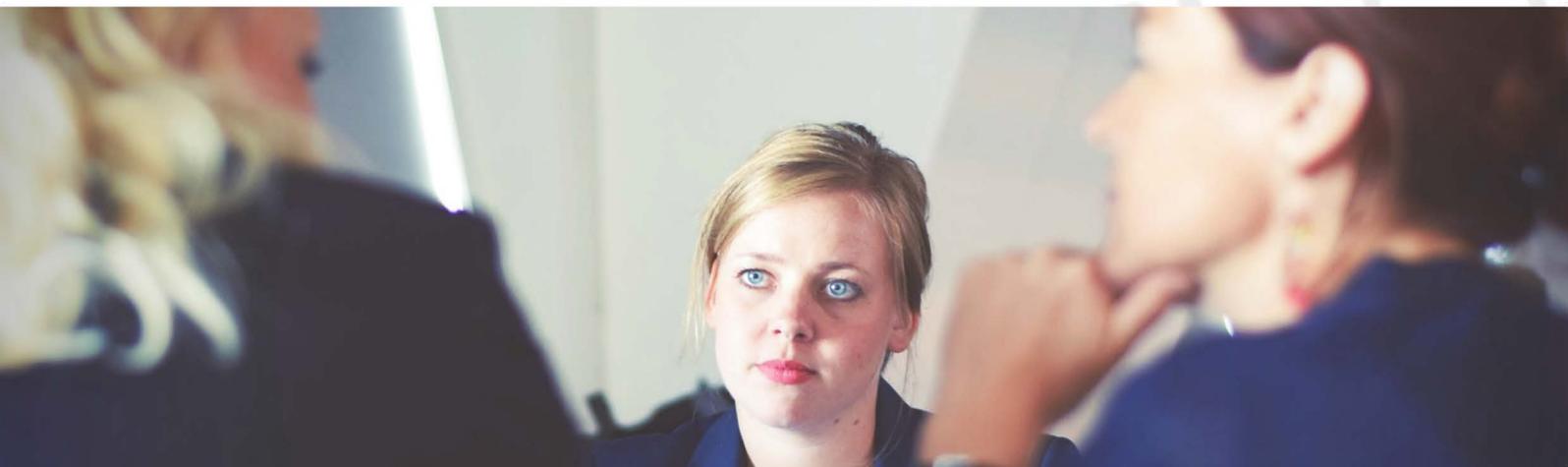
No Full-time Client-Side Project Manager

Another common reason for failed software implementations is an over reliance on the partner's Project Manager. Having a dedicated and experienced project manager in-house will make a lot of difference in the smooth running of a project of their size and complexity.

Asking a manager or an executive sponsor to manage a project of this scale alongside their main role will inevitably mean that neither job is done well.

- Determine who the project sponsor is from the start. This is where the buck stops - the said sponsor must have the responsibility and authority to remove any potential barriers to success.

- As the project develops, implementations become increasingly about handling business change, conflict resolution and stakeholder management. The project manager should be aware of the political climate within the company and have the soft skills to be able to position their project in the best light to ensure the project's a success. Your PM should be able to demonstrate both product and sector knowledge in order to build trust and relationships.



How to mitigate the risks?

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

Hold a kick-off meeting to set expectations, clarify roles and responsibilities.

- Include a key stakeholder / project sponsor to ensure visibility and their involvement from the outset.

- Develop and enforce a risk escalation process both internally and partner side.

- Regularly outline the project roles and responsibilities throughout the project as they shift and evolve over time.

Mistake No.5:

Insufficient Focus & Under-Estimating the Resources Required

Once the roles and responsibilities have been defined, it's a common mistake to underestimate the required resources.



How to mitigate the risks?

Be clear about the budget and level of resources required

Be clear about the budget and level of resources required and determine any increase in resource necessary to ensure the project doesn't stall at the start.

Ensure that everyone is aware of the commitment needed from the business users (commonly underestimated departments include Finance, Accounting and Human Resources). By making sure everyone involved understands the commitment expected of them - this will help to avoid any confusion when competing projects come along.

Mistake No.6:

Lack of Proven Project Methodology



How to mitigate the risks?

CSS has a proven implementation approach that's focused on business needs and mitigating risk through:

- Addressing the key needs of the business
- Reducing the overall risk
- Delivering value from day one
- Reducing customisations and associated costs

Effective management to keep things on track

To achieve a successful software implementation, a high-level of co-ordination is required to ensure work is on track to achieve your objectives. At CSS, we recommend the creation of a joint Project Board composed of key stakeholders and senior project leaders. Our methodology provides numerous scheduled meetings at which to check the progress against key milestones and review budget consumption and earned value. It's also a way to highlight potential issues early on and agree how to mitigate the risk.

Initiate testing as quickly as possible

When schedules get tight, reducing the number of testing cycles is often the first area that gets cut. The purpose of testing our software is not to see if it works but if the system meets your business needs and produces the output you need.

CSS as a partner can provide a configured version of our solutions as quickly as possible (based on the findings from your initial discovery / workshops). This will allow you to iteratively test throughout the implementation (rather than leaving testing to the last phase). This will decrease the risk of software missing important functions and ensure that it is positively received by end-users.

Rapid Configuration & Focus on Business Processes

In traditional project methodologies, configuration often comes into play within the latter stages of the project. It's important to choose a partner that delivers a working system as rapidly as possible.

Our experience is that this approach shortens the project, and avoids misunderstandings emerging too late in the process. Our approach helps to avoid costly mistakes by addresses the key business process needs in tightly focused workshops e.g. creating purchase orders.

Mistake No.7:

Not Investing in Role-Based Training

It's easy to become over reliant on CSS consultants to the point at which employees or end-users don't understand the new system and even resent it. There is no doubt that external help from CSS consultants is important for their expertise, best-practice advice and additional resource. However to avoid the internal team becoming over-reliant you should adopt our tips below:

How to mitigate the risks?

Carry out thorough training

It's important to have a thorough training plan to transfer the knowledge from the consultants to the internal employees once the project starts to wind down.

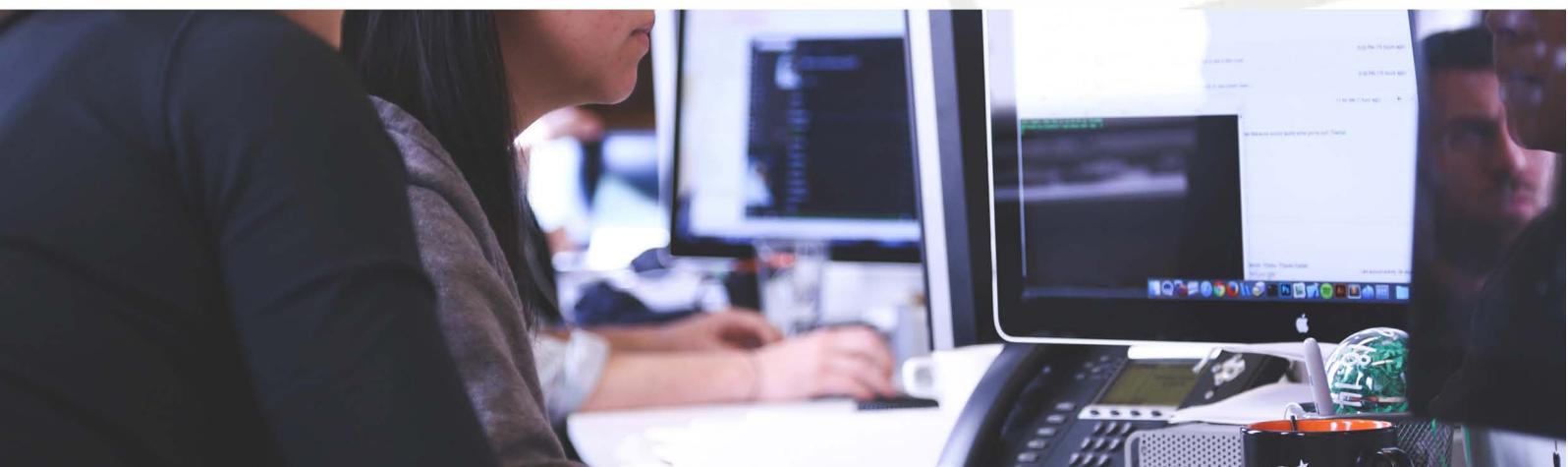
Our software solutions are used by more and more personnel across a wide range of departments within the business including - finance and accounting, procurement, supply chain, customer service and relations, sales, human resources and more. Training potentially hundreds, if not thousands of users, to the right level of detail, at the right time is no easy task.

This lack of 'proper' training is one of the most common reasons IT projects fail. Make sure that the end-user has enough time to get used to the system from a business process perspective before going live. This will increase your chance of success.

Avoid "on the job" training

Experience is key when implementing our software solutions. As the typical lifespan of our software is 10 to 12 years - Most employees will have been through one (maybe two implementations) in their career.

Just as you wouldn't be comfortable with a surgeon carrying out brain surgery on you as their first or second patient. Implementing a new software is equally life threatening to your business. As such, your internal and external project leaders ought to have experience of implementing our system several times over. This is one of the benefits of working closely with an experienced software vendor.



Mistake No.8:

No On-going Maintenance & Support

Once our software is live, it's important that you invest in on-going maintenance and support, that's why CSS provide as part of the project cost fanatical on-going product support for your organisation.

How to mitigate the risks?

Choose a partner that has a comprehensive support and maintenance strategy

CSS are all about being a long term partner that can ensure you continue to gain the maximum benefits from your technology investment.

Flexible support options

CSS will provide flexible support options from standard to 24x7 packages so you're able to support staff at different seasonal peaks where additional resources may be required.



Mistake No.9:

Not Decommissioning Legacy Systems

It's important to include the decommissioning of legacy or out-of-date systems into your software implementation plan. Many companies fail to decommission old systems and the end result is a new software solution with all the old applications hanging off of it.

How to mitigate the risks?

Create a roadmap to decommission old IT systems

Make sure you create a roadmap to decommission your old IT system/s and assign the appropriate resource. If you fail to optimise your new system/s, you will end up paying for yet another piece of software, along with maintenance and support along with any interfaces into our software solution - this won't help you reach your goal of a streamlined business with improved efficiency, and reduced costs.

Here's a summary checklist to gauge the health of your software implementation:

1. Have you conducted an internal audit?
2. Have you created a detailed plan and set of goals?
3. Have you communicated the need for change?
4. Do your employees understand how the new system will benefit them / hinder them if you don't change?
5. Do you have a clear project sponsor who is actively leading the project and removing barriers for a successful software implementation?
6. Do all the project leaders, stakeholders and potential partners agree and understand the business objectives?
7. Do all the project leaders and stakeholders agree the priority of the project in relation to other competing departmental initiatives?
8. Do you have a full-time client-side project manager?
9. Do your project leader/s have experience implementing IT/business systems?
10. Do you have a list of current functionality and future requirements?
11. Are you clear on the budget and level of internal resources required?
12. Are you focused on using as much standard functionality as possible? Does your solution of choice meet 80% - 90% of your requirements in its "vanilla state"?
13. Do you have sufficient role-based training in place within your project plan?
14. Have you created a roadmap to decommission old IT systems?

Get in touch

Rescue & Project Recovery

We have years of experience recovering projects from a failing state or aren't reaching their full potential. We can help you meet your ambitious project expectations in the delivery of training, small developments, systems configuration or the implementation (or re-implementation) of add-on modules.

New Projects

At CSS, our Mission is to become a long-term trusted partner for our customers and the implementation process is where that partnership begins. We have a great team of people, with years of industry expertise, who build that relationship as they guide our customers through the implementation process.

If you would like to find out more about our approach to new or recovery enterprise implementations, why not get in touch:

Call us on 0844 879 4531 or email us at enquiries@csseurope.co.uk

