

### Attaining Tech Project Success

Effective automation of productivity enhancing technologies is a requisite to competing in nearly every industry. What this means, however, is that you should carefully consider the critical elements that need to be in place to ensure success. Best practice companies have overcome technology project failures and problems by paying attention to the following critical success factors:

#### **1. Clearly define the business need and ensure it is tied to critical business issues and objectives**

First and foremost ensure your project is driven by the business and tied to overall strategic objectives. Don't fall into the trap that many others have and develop a great IT solution only to have it negatively impact strategic customer relationships.

#### **2. Ensure clear sponsorship**

This is one of the most common reasons that IT initiatives fail. Having clear and visible top management sponsorship is not only critical; it is mandatory. Without top management openly advocating the use of new technology, people will revert to traditional ways of doing things.

#### **3. Ensure the right resources are committed, available, and held accountable**

Many times IT initiatives are driven by technology professionals with very little representation from the business areas being impacted. If this is the case with your initiative, slow down and wait until you can get the proper mix of people on the team to represent the business and IT. Also, make sure the team is committed to the project's success and held accountable by tying the success of the project to their individual performance objectives.

#### **4. Implement horizontally**

Rarely does a critical IT initiative have an impact that is limited to only one particular function or department. Business processes cross organization boundaries and so will the supporting technology. Only through a holistic approach, and involving all departments and organizations impacted, can a project's success be ensured. Waiting until the end to bring in the technology group to validate the systems clearly demonstrates the risks of not involving the appropriate organizations and functions early in a project.

#### **5. Understand and optimize the business process before automating**

There is an excellent argument to be made that there is no such thing as an "IT" initiative;

there are only business initiatives which often are intended to improve business processes. Technology is simply an enabler, a tool. To gain the value offered by technology, the underlying business process needs to be optimized first. Automating an inefficient business process actually makes things worse.

### **6. Establish and enforce clear standards and business rules**

The foundation for efficient business processes and therefore, the effective use of technology, is a set of clear business rules and standards by which everyone abides. How efficient can an accounts payable process be without clearly adhering to predefined business rules related to grants of authority and approvals? How can technology be truly leveraged if everyone is not adhering to a set of common standards? Make sure the appropriate attention is paid not only to processes and systems, but also to establishing and adhering to underlying standards and business rules.

### **7. Utilize well-defined project management and business process methodologies**

While most companies have predefined project management and process development methodologies, it is not uncommon to see them ignored. Make sure that a disciplined approach to managing both the project and the process is used to ensure timeliness, quality, and cost effectiveness.

Should you find that any of these seven critical success factors are missing, proceed at your own risk! However, once these factors are in place, you are well on your way to attaining IT project success.

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