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The Business Management System Implementation Process

My previous articles covered the software and partner selection process as well as the importance of implementing on an effective network infrastructure. In this section, my focus is on the vital implementation process. It is an area where many projects of this nature have foundered in the past so it is as well to start with a health warning.

“There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would benefit by the new” Macchiavelli

Although written in the sixteenth century, the warning is still valid today. Implementing a new integrated business management system involves change. If it doesn't then why are you doing it? The effective rollout of a new solution will have an effect on people and processes. Nobody likes change unless there are pressing reasons. The role of management in handling those changes is crucial in the success of the project. The first task for the management is to explain why such changes are necessary and to gain buy-in for those reasons.

Once this is achieved, the next task is to set up the internal project team to manage the deployment process within the business. My company, Anglia Business Computers has successfully implemented over sixty integrated MBS Navision solutions since becoming involved with the system some 8 years ago. While all have worked, the smoother implementations have a number of attributes that are worth sharing. They include the following:

Board Champion: The backing of a board director with a clear vision of the expected deliverables from an integrated solution has been a key factor in the success of the deployment.



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Operational Champion: The attributes of an operational champion is somebody with an in-depth knowledge of the business and works well with the board champion to deliver the required changes.

Appropriately Resourced: The smoother deployments invariably have key users with the right skills and attitude on board from the start.

Realistic Expectations: Setting and managing expectations that are realistic from the business aspect are crucial. These days, modern software technology is rarely the inhibitor. Barriers to progress tend to be the ability of the company personnel to absorb the required process changes while still carrying out their daily tasks.

Detailed Planning: An agreed roadmap with clearly defined milestones is essential for resource planning. At Anglia, we use a solution model to outline the deliverables and a project foundation document to define the terms of reference and resources required by both sides for a successful deployment.

Effective Communications: In a project involving various departments and which can take between two and six months, things will go wrong. When they do, it is important that all parties involved are informed on the causes of the hold-up and what remedial steps are being taken to get back on track.

Training: The most successful deployments have always involved time invested in key users. These then passed on their system skills to end users in formalised training sessions. Curtail this activity at your peril.

Test, Test and Test Again: Just because the supplier has delivered the system configured to meet your stated requirements doesn't mean that you are ready to deploy. At Anglia, we conduct what we call a conference room pilot. This takes key users through every part of the system using real client data to ensure that the company is ready for the system. The cutover to the new system doesn't occur until all parties agree that the testing is complete.



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Review: Once live, review progress against the key deliverables. Is progress being made or has the game plan changed. In the heat of battle during the last few weeks of the project, it is easy to lose sight of the reasons you transferred.

Hopefully, this will provide you with some useful guidelines in avoiding some of the pitfalls that have been endemic in the IT industry where integrated business management solutions are involved. In the next article, I will be turning my attention to the topic of supply chain integration, one of the key requirements of many of the larger organisations.

For further information email linkfresh@angliabs.com.