TCii Strategic and Management Consultants

Why software rollouts too often result in rollovers

A Guest Article by Valerie Merrill
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Why resistance is rife

Why do we find software unused and still in its wrapper? Why do people not want to use the new software or system? Why do members of staff protest about a new system - its performance, its complexity, and its enforced changes?

Proper planning prevents poor performance. A rollout is a performance; it should be clear and consistent for every user, it should be capable of being well received, it should be given a good press, and above all it should enhance performance and productivity.

A large, well known company installed new software across scores of PCs, didn't bother to inform their staff, and then wondered why nobody used it. One or two brave souls double-clicked on the new icon when they saw it on their PCs but were confronted with a screen so very different from anything they had previously seen, they just clicked on the Exit option! Tens of thousands of pounds were literally thrown away.

Experience shows that such happenings are not isolated instances, especially in large organisations.

The following eight-point plan has been designed to ensure that software rollouts don't turn out to be expensive rollovers that leave business objectives in tatters, and staff morale down the tubes.

1. It is essential to achieve buy-in at the outset from the people that matter: stakeholders, sponsors, chief executive, managing director, and right down to the members of staff who will be using the system. Get them *involved*!

2. Communication is key – confident, effective, and repetitive. Start early. Once decisions are made, tell all the end-users about them. The right messages at the right time. What, Why, When and How.

3. End-users need to be examined - numbers, locations, roles and abilities. What will the rollout mean to them in their day to day life? Will different people do different things with the new software? Build an analysis of training, knowledge or skill needs to determine if pre-rollout training is needed.

4. Examine the business processes: do they reflect the changes that the rollout will bring? Do new processes need to be written and explained to the workforce as part of the rollout?

5. Thoroughly check existing legacy systems for compatibility - the best new system can be ruined if such issues are not checked thoroughly during development.

6. Pilot the software with a small group of varied users before undertaking the primary rollout. Ensure that any issues raised are resolved and re-piloted.

7. Choose the correct medium for communicating information. Use of email, corporate Intranet, etc. Put posters up in the canteen or by coffee machine. Print off a colourful information message-sheet and put it on each person's PC keyboard.

8. Ongoing evaluation; manage any continuing needs; allow for new joiners; identify staff who still need support and hand holding.

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If you would like more information on any of the points covered in this Guest Article, please contact **TCii** on **020 7099 2621**.