

TOP 12 TIPS FOR ACHIEVING BEST FIT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



Plan Plan Plan

When embarking on a new IT project start with your organization's mission, goals, and current objectives and make sure the project is well aligned with them. Determine the project scope, budget, staffing needs, and the risks of undertaking this effort. Put great pains into generating your needs and requirements for the project up front. Too often this critical process is short-changed. The consequences can be extremely costly.

Don't Start with Technology

Don't automate something that is not functioning well. Good IT projects start by evaluating the existing processes and work flow before considering a technical solution. Take a holistic systems approach. Now is the time to consider re-engineering processes.

Focus on the People

One size doesn't fit all in IT. Your organization's immune system will reject a project that is not compatible. Involve the end-user "customers" in your organization throughout the entire process. Survey them to get ideas for problems with the current system or process and understand their requirements. Get their input, keep them up-to-date on project status, and involve them in testing, deployment and celebration of project milestones. The project is undertaken to empower them. They will feel ownership and help make the project a success.

Manage the Project

Hiring an expert can be a wise decision and ultimately save time, money, and headaches—especially when coordinating multiple technologies and stakeholders and vendors with conflicting demands. You want a project manager who you can really talk to and who is a relentless project driver focused on meeting dates and end goals. You want someone who is in charge of making tough decisions and keeping you informed.

Dedicate Staff

Even with a professional project manager you will need to dedicate a staff person to the project. If staffing internally, don't let the technology guy run with the project unchecked. It's often good to have a non-technical staff partnering with IT to make sure that the right thing is being done for the customers in the organization. The converse is true—don't exclude IT staff!

Fear Integration

Never underestimate how much more complex your IT can become by adding something new to it. Conduct reviews with experts within and outside your organization to hash out the integration issues with your existing environment. Evaluate having an alternative plan if the project fails.

Start with a Stable Base

Dropping new technology in on an unstable or unmanaged IT base can cause more problems and create costs. Get the house in order and fix chronic problems so there is a stable infrastructure to build upon.

Buy or Customize

Building customized software solutions from scratch is extremely difficult. Today there are many flexible products to choose from and many allow for customization and the development of rich add-ons. Don't build something from scratch unless you really have to. And don't select a product just because it is free or donated. You might regret it.

Less can be More

One way to avoid complexities in your project is to keep things simple where possible. Be very diligent about prioritizing your requirements and features. What do you really need? Often solutions are available from application service providers. This can remove a lot of internal administrative, maintenance and hosting costs. Small organizations should be very leery of adding new servers and systems to manage. In addition, modular solutions rather than large monolithic ones can be less complex, more flexible, and easier to maintain.

Remember Sustainability

Many IT projects don't look at the longer term costs associated with maintaining a new system such as required staff expertise, service provider costs, dedicated staffing, reliability, ease of use, amount of administration, fixes and modifications, etc. Look for solutions that are reliable and practical to operate and efficient and green for the planet. It can save you money.

Stay Secure and Privacy Aware

Every technology project should include security and privacy considerations about data and system availability, confidentiality, and integrity. A risk analysis must be done to evaluate new exposures created by the changes to your IT environment. New client data may mean new regulations.

You're Not Done

The project will end but the work doesn't stop there. The new technology will become part of your on-going operations and require IT maintenance, change management, upgrades, etc. Your organization will benefit from a Lessons Learned analysis for when the next technology project rolls around!

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