INSIDE OUT Think about compatibility issues early

Dealing with compatibility issues can take a lot of time, so examine them early in the process. The time needed to determine whether your current hardware and software will work and what changes must be made to allow them to work with Windows Server 2012 can be lengthy. When you add to that the time necessary to requisition, obtain, install, and configure new software—especially if you must write custom code—you can see why you don't want to leave this until the end of the project.

Defining objectives and scope

A key aspect of planning any large-scale IT deployment of an operating system is determining the overall objectives for the deployment and the scope of users, computers, networks, and organization divisions that are affected. The fundamental question of scope is this: What can you realistically expect to accomplish in the given time within existing project constraints, such as staffing and budget?

Some of the objectives that you identified in the early stages of the project are likely to change as constraints become more apparent and new needs and requirements emerge. To start with, you must identify who will be affected—which organizational subdivisions and which personnel—as well as who will be doing what. These are questions that map to the business goals that must be accomplished.

You also must identify the systems that will be affected—which WANs, local area networks (LANs), subnets, servers, and client systems? In addition, you must determine the software that will be changed—which server software, client software, and applications?

INSIDE OUT Planning for scope creep

Projects grow—it's inevitable—and although the scope of some projects creep, others gallop. Here are a few tips to help you keep the project scope to a manageable level:

- When an addition to the project is proposed, never say yes right away. Think through the consequences thoroughly, examining the impact on the rest of the project and the project team, before agreeing to any proposed changes.

- Insist on management buyoff on changes to the plan. In at least some cases, you won't get approval, automatically deferring the requested changes.

- Argue for trade-offs in the project when possible—so that adding one objective means removing another—rather than just adding tasks to your to-do list.

- Try to defer any noncritical proposed changes to a future project.