Individual: Implementation Strategies

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Application Implementation

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In preparation for the implementation of a new Business Resource Planning system, it is important to identify key stake-holders for this process and understand the challenges we may face during implementation. Our most important stake-holder for this process is our users. Employees who will be using this software every day, not only to manage the business, but also run it as well. This includes employees in all branches of the company, from shipping handlers to accountants, we need to have a clear understanding of our employee’s expectations and opinions of the new system.

Mark Brewton, our Chief Executive Officer will be a key stake-holder for this project because he chose the new system and has asked his IT director to acquire and implement the new system. Mark expects the new system to streamline the accounting and purchasing functions and help to achieve better inventory control. We don’t expect to face any challenges with Mark.

Mike Benson, our Chief Information Technology Director will be heading the implementation of the new system and will be monitoring its progress throughout the entire process. Since Mike is spearheading this project, the only challenges he will bring to the table are project requirements, such as deadlines and budgetary restrictions.

Barbara Scharer, our Chief Financial Officer will be providing budgetary restrictions for the project, and will challenge us by expecting accurate and useful data from the new system. She hopes to find out why the company is not as profitable as it should be by using the information provided by our new system. Barbara’s department will be benefitted by the new system’s accounting, sales, and inventory management processes. With these tools, they can more closely track misinformation caused by the old system, and quickly find solutions that make the operation run more smoothly.

William Hunter, our Chief Operations Officer will be a stake-holder because of the changes associated with his department that this new system will bring. Since William is in charge of keeping the company supplied with everything that it needs, having a better inventory management system in place will make his job easier, while also challenging him by making him learn a new system. We also recommend that a review of the current inventory tracking process be performed, which should be focused on making sure current inventory levels are kept as accurately as possible. While this new system may assess some of these problems, process changes will need to be made if we want to resolve the issues we face with inventory management.

Jennifer Morales, our Sales and Advertising Director will have a stake in this project due to her department’s need for sales data. The new system should be able to provide data about company sales and market trends, and also provide a clear picture of the success or failure of any marketing campaigns that they might implement. Will much of the department’s job will remain the same, Jennifer will challenge us by wanting more smart data about the companies sales and marketing success.

Roger Tomlinson, our Human Resources Director will have some work to do in implementing this new process, because much of what his department does will rely on the new system. Tracking employee data and performing wage assessments should be streamlined in the new system, as well as processes like payroll and tax deductions. Roger’s department will be expecting to benefit from the streamlining of these processes and will be challenging the system to exceed their expectations.

Finally our Network Administrator, Jim Travis, will be a key stakeholder in the implementation process because of his responsibility for the companies networks and hardware. Jim is worried that the new system will greatly affect the company’s technical infrastructure and may require them to lease new hardware or significantly change current hardware. Both of these things could significantly increase Jim’s workload, He knows that the implementation will require, not only a production environment in which the new system will run, but will also necessitate creating a test environment for user acceptance testing, and a training environment in which users will be trained to use the new system. With this in mind, Jim will be challenging us to find that solutions that do not significantly affect the companies technical infrastructure, or increase his workload when implementing the new system.

On a large-scale implementation project such as this, one of the key components to a successful implementation is proper communication. As the playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”. To this end, it is important that we create a communication plan that properly identifies forms of communication, frequency of those forms of communication, and project milestones that will help easily determine the status of the project and whether or not everything is going along smoothly. This plan should include specific examples of documentation, including both user and technical documentation that will be needed to help effectively communicate our plans with stake-holders. It will also be important to describe the Change Control Process that will be employed on the project, so everyone understands how to the project will manage disruptions and changes to the project plan. Finally, this communication plan will explore out-sourcing options available to the project, and compare them side-by-side with in-house management of specific tasks.

In every project communication with the client and key stake-holders should always be a high priority. To this end, this communication plan will attempt to communicate with key stake-holders as often as possible without interfering with their other duties at Brewton. These types of communications will include:

* Weekly update emails to every member of the stake-holder team about the progress of the project that also encourages them to add their input into the implementation process and keep us updated about their feelings regarding the project. These communications will be sent out every Monday morning during the implementation process, and should be drafted by a senior member of the implementation team.
* Project Team Input and Review meetings at the end of each week during the implementation process. These meetings will serve as a space for the project team to update team leaders about their progress and share their input about the project. Notes from this meeting and progress reports from employees will be used to update stake-holders about the project during their weekly communications email.
* Major Stake-Holder meetings at the completion of each milestone of the project, which allow the stake-holders to continue to be informed about the progress of each step of the implementation process. These meetings will also serve to inform stake-holders about the projects next phase or milestone, and the teams goals for that phase. This will include a description of the deliverables that are expected of the team, and the deadlines associated with those deliverables, as well as a space for stake-holders to share their opinions about how the next phase should proceed.

With these steps in place, the project should be able to clearly communicate its projects with all stake-holders and the entire project team. This brings us to our definition of the project’s milestones and what they mean for the project. These milestones will serve as key markers for the project’s development, and should denote each separate phase of the project. With this in mind, our milestones currently include the following:

* System Deployment Preparation
* Data Conversion Process
* Systems Testing
* User Training
* System Startup
* Full Product Implementation (Project Complete)

Every project will encounter disruptions or changes to the plan, and there should always be a plan in place to handle these kind of changes. This projects Change Control Process will follow models from other successful project implementations by following these six steps:

* Record/Classify: Identify the change that needs to be implemented and classify it. Gather feedback from the team about how this will affect their current goals.
* Assess: Identify how exactly this change should be implemented and break it into smaller sub-sections to figure out how it will affect the current process. Also determine how this change will affect current work and adjust for that.
* Plan: Begin creating pseudo-code and workflow diagrams to determine how exactly the change will work logically with existing plans and code
* Build/Test: Code the chance and perform systems testing with the current project to ensure that it has been implemented properly.
* Implement: Incorporate the change into current working models of the project.
* Close: Complete the change process by ensuring that all members of the project team have accepted the changes and are aware of how it will affect the project.
* Develop a project communication plan to describe how stakeholders and managers will be kept informed regarding project progress. This will include the form of communication (status reports, meetings, etc.), frequency, and specific project milestones that will aid in determining where the implementation stands.
* Describe the various kinds of documentation that will be required to support the future system operation, including both user and technical documentation.
* Describe the Change Control Process that will be employed on the project to properly manage any disruptions to the progress of the project.
* Evaluate out-sourcing of implementation tasks, using consulting services versus performing them in-house, describing the costs, benefits, and challenges associated with each option.