

WHITE PAPER



10 STEPS TO THE SUCCESSFUL
IMPLEMENTATION
OF A PROJECT PORTFOLIO
MANAGEMENT SOLUTION



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An Eleco plc Company

This white paper provides an overview for assisting companies with the implementation of a project portfolio management solution.

Project managers and senior managers who are considering implementing a new project portfolio management system will benefit from the practical advice on:

- Eight common management mistakes that should be avoided;
- 10 steps to achieve successful implementation of a project portfolio management solution.

1 EIGHT COMMON MANAGEMENT MISTAKES

There are a number of common management mistakes that can lead to users resisting adoption of a new system:

1. ABDICATION

Senior management appoint a manager to oversee the implementation of an new project portfolio management system and then turn its attention to other matters assuming that all will be well, without any further involvement from them.

2. POOR COMMUNICATION

Senior management believe that everyone will conform to a new set of procedures for planning and managing projects without having communicated the reasons behind the implementation to the users of the system.

3. FAILURE TO TACKLE NON-CONFORMISTS

Often senior management is aware of one or two dissenters in the organisation but they rely upon the introduction of the new system to improve these individual's productivity and performance, within the new project management processes, rather than tackling them head-on through direct communication.

4. WEAK MANAGEMENT

Senior management often have a mistaken belief that the new project portfolio management system alone will introduce and enforce new processes.

5. NOT COMMUNICATING OBJECTIVES

Senior management have recognised the potential return on investment that can be achieved from the new project portfolio management system, but have not explained this to the implementation manager to engage their support and promote adoption of the system throughout the organisation.

6. POORLY SPECIFIED SOLUTION

Senior management believe that it is the responsibility of the software supplier to design and implement a complete solution in isolation and fail to appreciate that the organisation and its key personnel are a vital part of that solution.

7. FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE RESISTANCE

Senior management do not recognise there will be a natural resistance to accepting and adopting the new system by many users and fail to devise a plan to overcome this.

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8. FEAR OF THE 'EXPERT'

A special mention must be given to one of the greatest threats to a successful implementation of a new system, fear of the 'expert'.

In a typical scenario, senior management is dependant upon a highly respected and influential project manager.

Failure to engage with these knowledgeable individuals to harness their experience and help them to embrace the changes can result in them being allowed to continue to plan their projects in their own way, using the old system. This is the worst of all outcomes for the business that now has two systems running in parallel with some people embracing the new technology and those, loyal to the powerful 'expert', using the old system.

The chances of completing a successful implementation can be seriously hampered by any one of these mistakes. Making multiple mistakes without taking corrective action is almost consigning the implementation to failure.

2 MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Senior management is responsible for all of these potential problems. The management team is responsible for making sure that resistance to change is considered, planned for and dealt with in order to maximise the chances of success for a new project portfolio management system implementation.

3 TEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

Drawing on the experience of companies that have successfully implemented a new project portfolio management system, there are a number of important steps that have been identified which can maximise the chances of a smooth transition and implementation.

1. PROBLEM RECOGNITION

Senior management must recognise that resistance to change is a potential problem. There needs to be an acceptance that some time, budget and internal resources should be allocated to deal with this.

2. CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Senior management must have a clearly defined statement of objectives for the system, detailing the expected benefits. Without this it will be impossible to determine whether the implementation is a success from a business perspective.

3. IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER

An internal manager should be appointed to co-ordinate the implementation. This person should be given the necessary skills and authority to guide users through the new procedures and promote their adoption of the project portfolio management system.

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4. REVIEW PROCEDURES

Existing procedures must be understood by all system users and clearly documented. Any proposed changes to these procedures should be highlighted and the benefits detailed and communicated to all system users.

5. INVOLVE 'EXPERTS'

Highly respected and influential individuals must be involved in the planning process and should be consulted early on in the process so that any valid points they may have can be factored into the final solution.

6. COMMUNICATION

All staff and contractors whose work is affected by the new system should be briefed about the objectives of the system, the expected outcomes and the timeline for implementation. It should be made clear at this stage that old systems WILL be removed at a specific time in the future, thereby encouraging everyone to be involved.

7. TRAINING

All staff and contractors involved in using the new project portfolio management system should be provided with appropriate training within the context of their roles. This training should also include any new procedures that are to be adopted.

Training should not be a one-off event. Staff turnover and new project contractors often results in new users attempting to figure out how a system works and learn on the job. Inevitably some expertise is lost with a change of staff and over time this can degrade the performance of the team. In the long run it is simpler and more cost-effective to have new starters and contractors properly trained, possibly combining this with a refresher course for existing staff.

8. IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW TEAM

An internal Implementation Review Team should be established comprising key personnel who will be involved with the new system e.g. project managers and resource/line managers. Weekly meetings, chaired by the Implementation Manager, should be held during the implementation process to highlight any perceived problems and discuss resolutions.

9. OLD SYSTEM SHUT-DOWN

At a pre-designed date, that has been communicated to all staff and contractors, the old system should be shut down and removed from company hardware, after giving reminders in the run up to the date.

10. VENDOR CLINICS

Building on the work done by the Implementation Review Team, a good system vendor will offer clinics to review and resolve teething issues and provide additional training if necessary.

4 PERIODIC SYSTEM REVIEW

As the organisation becomes more familiar with the system, the focus should switch away from vendor clinics and on to system review meetings that are broader in scope and involve senior stakeholders as well as the system vendor. System review meetings provide an opportunity for the organisation to explore new ways of extracting additional returns from the initial investment, as well as learning about new technical developments that could further enhance their business.

5 HELP IS AT HAND

Vendors and outside consultants can help with simple and complex change management issues like those mentioned briefly in this article. The soft issues they address can sometimes not be dealt with as easily or quickly by people who are closer to the problem and an outsider can often be a good facilitator of change. The costs are often insignificant when compared with the costs of the failure of the implementation or a protracted and fragmented implementation.

6 ABOUT ASTA DEVELOPMENT PLC

Asta Development is headquartered in the UK and supports its 40,000 users directly in the UK and internationally through a network of partners and resellers. Asta has been helping organisations plan, manage and control their projects and resources more effectively for more than 20 years.

Asta provides its customers with market leading project and resource management software, underpinned by a comprehensive portfolio of services. Asta Teamplan is our project portfolio and resource management software solution for organisations that manage people working across multiple projects, programmes portfolios.

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