

Learn. Use. Deliver.

EnterPlicity: 5 Tips to Achieve Maximum Value
from your Project Management Software



Contents

Introduction.....	3
#1: Keep it Simple	3
#2: Plan It.....	3
#3: Lead It.....	4
#4: Communicate Constantly.....	4
#5: Think Long Term	4
Conclusion.....	5
About EnterPlicity	5

Introduction

Project management software tools are a necessary part of every organization today. Yet many organizations fail to realize both the expected and potential benefits from using these tools. Whether your organization is using spreadsheets, desktop applications, or a full project management system, these five tips are designed to help your organization develop a plan to achieve significant advantages from its project management software implementation.

#1: Keep it Simple

Everybody today says to keep things simple, but it reality in rarely happens. Even organizations that are using spreadsheets, supposedly a simple tool and approach, clog up their spreadsheets with data and processes that are anything but simple. The problem is often that an organization begins to realize what it can do with the right tools and tries to do all of them right away. It's like trying to take a baby and run a marathon. They first need to crawl, then walk, and then run. Your organization is the same.

A better approach is to keep things very simple, especially in the first stages, and take a phased approach to the whole implementation. Identify just a couple of clear, realistic objectives for the first phase. When those are accomplished, identify additional objectives for subsequent phases. This approach

has a much higher-likelihood of succeeding.

How do you know if something is simple? You need to have a good pulse on the culture of your organization to fully answer that question. If your organizational culture thrives on change, and you have skilled people that readily adapt to new environments, then your organization can probably tackle more change. If your organization is reluctant to change, and you do not have people skilled at managing change, then you need to go a lot slower. In this scenario, be sure that you are not trying to accomplish more than two or three objectives at a time.

#2: Plan It

Implementing project management software is a project in and of itself. That means that it must be managed as such. The majority of organizations fail to use project management when implementing project management software. It's like the story of the dentist that didn't take care of his own teeth.

The planning process should include the setting of objectives (what are the most important things that we need to accomplish), the creation of the tasks involved and who will do them, and a project schedule broken up into phases. Phases give the benefit of allowing an organization to start off with a simple approach (see tip #1), while providing checkpoints. A checkpoint at the end of each phase provides the opportunity to

evaluate how things are going, whether or not the objectives were met, and what needs adjusting.

Planning the implementation also helps to set proper expectations and inform people of their role. Communicating the plan, and even involving people in the creation of the plan will go a long ways in this regard.

The bottom line is that going through some effort up front to plan the project will pay dividends down the road. Failing to do this will cause considerable pain down the road.

#3: Lead It

A common strategy for implementing project management software is to install it, obtain training on how to use it, and then hope that people will use it. The reason behind this strategy is either that there is no one with the bandwidth to lead the initiative, or an organization does not want to insist that people use it.

The problem is that this approach simply doesn't work. A project management software implementation, like any other project, must be led. Someone must set the vision, drive it, make sure it is happening, and ensure that the objectives are being met. They should get people on board, communicate well and often (up and down), and understand the strategic ramifications of the project.

If an organization does not have someone who can do this, they need

to get someone. Whether it is a contractor, consultant, borrowing someone from another project, or whatever, it is important to have someone to lead the project.

#4: Communicate Constantly

Communication is a critical part of any project, and a project management software implementation is no exception. Communication must be a part of every phase of the implementation. People are often reluctant to change. The more you communicate about expectations and what is coming, the better. Don't wait until you need something from them. Communicate ahead of time so that people can be prepared.

In the beginning of your implementation, hold some "brown bag lunch" sessions to give people a glimpse for what is coming. When the planning stage is complete, communicate the complete plan to people so they know when they will be impacted. At each phase, communicate the expectations and communicate what's coming in the next phase. Always, always communicate. Don't assume that people know what is going on.

#5: Think Long Term

Another aspect that kills implementations is trying to do everything right in the beginning. Organizations will go from having no project management tools (or just using spreadsheets), to tracking

everything from projects, schedules, tasks, resources, costs, documents, issues, risks, and more right from the start. This dooms an implementation to failure unless you have the culture to facilitate such rapid change, and the skills to manage it.

Instead, think long-term. Identify your vision for the future (where you want to be). But always identify the critical, short term aspects. For example, your long-term vision may be a complete system that tracks everything related to your projects. But the short term objectives may be simply to get all the projects listed in the central tool. The next objective may be to fully plan each project. Then add cost tracking, etc. That is much easier for an organization to swallow and before you know it, without nearly as much pain, you will have a pretty good project management system and related processes in place.

Conclusion

Use these tips to gain maximum value from your project management software, whether you are starting out, thinking about acquiring software, or already have tools within your organization. Discover the advantages from these straightforward tips and how, over time, they can turn your software implementation into a competitive advantage for your organization.

About EnterPlicity

EnterPlicity publishes resources to help organizations learn how to implement project management software, provides its own web-based software for small to mid-size organizations, and delivers services to help organizations gain value from their project management software.

Visit <http://www.enterplicity.com> for additional information.