ERP WINNERS

Continuous Improvement Change Management

"Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes." - Peter Drucker

Before beginning an initiative like an ERP implementation, the following are best practices to consider:

Understand the change readiness of your organization by evaluating certain criteria:

- **History:** What is your organization's history with implementing change? If poor results occurred, think through why and how this initiative will be different.
- **Saturation:** What is your organization's change saturation? If you have many other change initiatives going on, be realistic with timelines and how quickly end-users will embrace the change.
- **Leadership:** Do you possess the knowledge and understanding to lead and manage change? If you do not have "been there, done that" leaders and managers who have successfully implemented change, determine how you will get that competency.
- Develop change management tactics to help maximize the success of the project:
- **Communication:** Develop a detailed communication strategy and plan that addresses the unique information needs of those impacted by the new ERP. Think about things like stakeholder identification, communication frequency and the delivery channels to be used.
- **Sponsor Road Mapping:** Identify who the executive sponsor will be for the project. Ensure they understand their role and that they are visible and engaged throughout the project. Create a road map to help the sponsor with the specifics of what they need to do, such as building coalitions and communication.
- **Education and training:** Build a complete education and training plan to help people learn the features and understand the functionality of the new ERP system.

Leverage scenario-based learning to make the training real and applicable to the end-user.

- **Resistance Management:** Develop customized plans to help the more resistant groups (discovered during the change readiness assessment). This includes special tactics to help groups through change that could include education and listening sessions.

Reinforce the change once the new system is implemented. Reinforcement can include the following:

- **Celebrate Success:** Highlight business successes the new system fostered to keep momentum strong.
- **Provide On-Going Support:** Some parts of the organization will need additional training and support to become proficient users of the new system. This includes seeking feedback regarding what is working and what is not.
- **Incorporate Into Performance Management:** Link effective usage of the new system to performance expectations.

Implementing an ERP system can bring tremendous value to your organization, but it also comes with some risk and a substantial amount of change. People are naturally resistant to change, even if that change is needed, but you can be successful at navigating it if you commit to the discipline of change management.

Here's why ERP implementation is considered a "never-ending" project:

- **Continuous Improvement:** As business processes evolve and grow, the ERP system needs to adapt. There will be a need for regular updates, enhancements, and optimizations to meet changing business needs.
- **Module Expansion:** Many ERP systems offer multiple modules to cater to different business functions. After the initial implementation, organizations may choose to implement additional modules to extend the ERP system's capabilities.
- **Integration with New Technologies:** As technology advances, businesses may adopt new software or tools that need to be integrated with the ERP system for seamless data flow and process synchronization.
- **Regulatory Changes:** Industries are subject to regulatory changes, and the ERP system must be updated to comply with new laws and regulations.
- User Education and Training and Onboarding: As new employees join the company; they need educating and training in how and why to use the ERP system effectively.
- Data Management: Managing and maintaining data integrity is an ongoing process. Data cleansing, archiving, and several types of backups are essential to ensure the ERP system's reliability.

- Performance Monitoring: Regularly assessing the ERP system's performance is crucial to identify and address issues proactively.
- User Feedback and Support: Users' feedback is valuable for identifying areas of improvement and addressing usability concerns. Providing ongoing support is essential to assist users with any challenges they encounter.
- Security Updates: Cybersecurity threats evolve over time, so the ERP system needs regular security updates and measures to protect sensitive data.

While ERP implementation is not a never-ending "project" in the traditional sense, it requires continuous attention and adaptation to remain effective and support the organization's changing needs and growth over time. Organizations should follow the mindset of continuous improvement and view the ERP system as a dynamic tool to stay competitive and efficient overall.