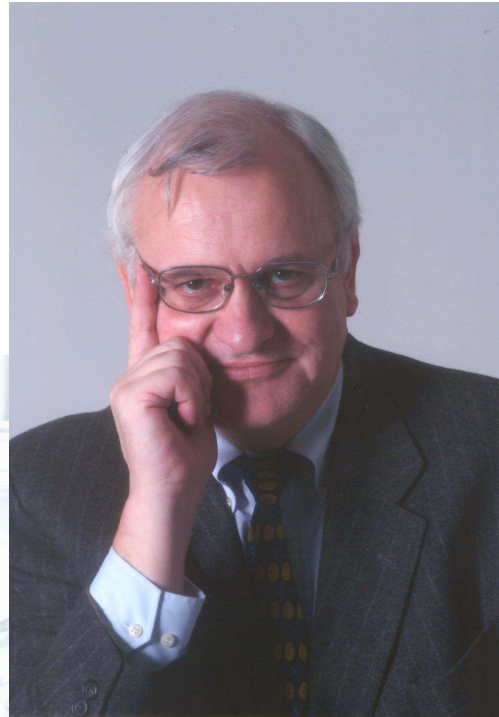


Making the Change

Last time, we discussed the selection of software and the possible need to develop bespoke applications in order to improve specific business processes. The introduction of new systems is always a trying time for those involved, as in many cases there is the risk of significant disruption to the normal flow of the business.



People Count

There are technical risks concerning the functionality of the system, capacity and throughput in operation, but these should have been evaluated and assessed prior to the final decision. The more significant risk at this stage concerns the people who will operate the systems. They have the capability to help or hinder the introduction of the system.

Communicating the rationale for any change is vital, and if they have been involved in the selection and planning processes they will be much happier and more committed to the success of the project.

Planning

Planning the introduction is vital. The process needs to start as soon as the decision to go ahead is taken. It needs to ensure that the equipment and software required is installed and ready to use at the appropriate time; that any data transfer is undertaken in a timely manner; that people have been trained and feel comfortable with the new systems; that consultants or trainers are on hand during the early days of operation. Try to plan to introduce the new system at a quiet time on the year. It is helpful to plan some review/feedback sessions where people can raise any issues that arise with wider experience of the use of the system. This could also be a good time to 'cleanse' your data, removing duplicates, checking postcodes and so on.

Preparation

The key to successful implementation is knowing how you want the system to operate once it is installed. You will want to work through each step of the process slowly and in detail, mapping out how each one is handled in the new system. It may well be worth writing a procedures manual at this point. Carefully check any reports and discuss them with those who receive them. Involve as many people as possible in the process – much better to catch problems now. Make sure you have a process for dealing with issues that occur with the new system so that nothing is overlooked.

D-Day

When the big day comes you should not have too much to fear if you have worked through the previous stages. Try to remain calm, use your processes and resolve issues as they occur. Soon you will begin to enjoy the benefits you set out to achieve.

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Charles Zealey is a consultant working with business professionals helping them to improve their organisation's productivity and effectiveness with the use of Information Technology. Typically a return on investment can be achieved with 6-12 months. To access help sheets go to www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets/. For a free half-hour consultation on business IT issues phone 01635 869863 or email lisa@itsolve.co.uk.

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