Over the past month and a half I have visited with six organizations that are currently implementing product lifecycle management software (PLM). While they are in different industries with different motivations and are implementing solutions from different software providers, all of them are large, global firms with distributed product development and engineering functions. The benefit of objectively evaluating this many programs in a short period of time is that I can extract themes and elevate them to critical factors of success. I will write about each these over the next couple of weeks. Here is the list:

1. **Solution Simplicity**
2. **Speed of Execution**
3. **Program Management**
4. **Business Sponsorship**
5. **Engaged Governance**
6. **Value Orientation**
7. **Transformation Leadership**

I believe that these factors are highly correlated with program success when success is defined as delivering the expected business value with on-time and on-budget execution of the program. When I am asked to perform a “quality assurance” assessment of a PLM program or am engaged to remediate an implementation that is floundering, these are the areas that I evaluate first. Getting the fundamentals right increases the probability of success and provides a wider margin for error and experimentation.

If you are in the middle of a PLM implementation, or are contemplating the launch of a program, ask yourself how you stack up against these critical success factors. Be honest. My experience says that you probably have opportunity for improvement.
About the Author

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For the past 30 years, Bill has helped executives in technology-driven industries transform their competencies to deliver results. He is a highly regarded consultant, speaker, and writer on the topics of innovation strategy, product development, portfolio management, technology commercialization, and the software systems that enable innovation. Keep up with Bill's latest research and thoughts on innovation and the rising role of the Chief Innovation Officer at www.TheChiefInnovationOfficer.com.