Implementing Global IT Systems: Don't Jump the Gun

by Ted Farrington

With over 30 years of experience working in research and development (R&D) for a variety of companies and industries, I've seen my fair share of information technology (IT) systems implemented to support various global processes such as product lifecycle management (PLM), phase-gate, portfolio management, legal and finance.

Having observed these projects from all angles, I began to notice a pattern behind some of the most common mistakes being made during the implementation of large global IT systems in support of R&D or other business processes.

This series provides leading practices for avoiding the top ten most common mistakes.

Mistake #6: Jumping the Gun

Perform readiness assessments to improve ROI throughout the implementation

One of the most valuable, but underutilized, tools for managing change while implementing large process systems is the **readiness assessment**. It's important to gauge whether the process system is necessary and if the organization is ready for its implementation to avoid wasted time and energy. Although significant formal efforts are required, there are two types of assessments that will improve ROI throughout the project implementation.

Organizational readiness assessment

As discussed previously in *Mistake #4– Ignoring Inconsistencies*, large multi-campus organizations, like R&D, go through stages of development. Until an organization has progressed from silos to interdependency, there often isn't a need to justify the effort required to implement a global IT system. The organization really isn't ready for such a tool.

While determining your readiness, make sure to avoid organizational overload. This is a question of coordination and prioritization across process system projects. At one of my past organizations, every function in the company seemed to be launching some new system, completely uncoordinated. It felt like we were in training for a new system every month and we had no idea most were coming at us. I can't claim to know the magic number, but most organizations can only handle one or two major process system implementations each year. Past this point, folks get overloaded and overwhelmed with change and nothing goes smoothly.

Technology readiness assessment

It's incredible the range of computer savviness and comfort levels that can exist across campuses that have been isolated for years. One campus may still enter everything in paper notebooks and share data by emailing spreadsheets, while another, more tech savvy location may have developed home-grown systems to aid the development process. These differences are often ignored until it's too late. Formal readiness assessments can be done in parallel with the process harmonization work already described.

On one project, I saw the PMO team spend one week every month working from the campus with the least experience in global systems and technology, just to make them more comfortable. A good readiness assessment should not become a "book on a shelf." It must lead to concrete actions that will get the campuses as close to a common level of readiness as possible.

Organizations that jump the gun and attempt to implement new systems before honestly assessing their organizational and technological readiness risk project failure and will struggle to gain buy in from end users. By investing the effort to check all systems before launch, you increase buy in and functionality across the organization.

Stay tuned to discover leading practices for avoiding these ten common mistakes. Being mindful of the challenges and solutions discussed in this series will greatly increase the chances of your next project becoming a sustainable success.

The Entire Top Ten List:

1. The "Global" Roll Out	6. Jumping the Gun
2. Playing the Shell Game	7. Skipping Stakeholders
3. The "Fix All" Solution	8. Skipping the Dress Rehearsal
4. Ignoring Inconsistencies	9. Self-Gathering Data
5. Missing the Point	10. DIY Projects

Download the eBook:

Top Ten Mistakes Made Implementing IT Systems and How to Avoid Them

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Ted's 35 years of research and development experience were built in the CPG industry, where he held leadership roles in advanced research and R&D. As a fellow at Kalypso, he uses his years of experience in breakthrough innovation, research foresight and R&D business processes & systems to support clients.