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8 Tips to Reduce the Pain from Installing Software

Installing new software can be a traumatic experience for any business. New software provides a new interface and new ways of doing a job that everybody knew how to do.

This means re-learning how to do your job. When you do this, it will reduce your productivity. This has a significant impact on small businesses because they don't have the extra resources to handle this lost productivity. This article offers tips to help reduce that impact.

1 Don't train people on the software.

Most software training is provided as a crash course. I call it like drinking from a fire hose. From the software supplier's perspective, this is the most efficient way as it minimizes their costs. So much information is provided that most people come away confused. They seldom remember what they were taught.

In addition, you are being taught about all of the features and functions, when you really want to learn about how this software changes the job that you have to do.

If you start by defining your business process and what functions in the software that are necessary to get the job done, you can train only on those functions. This way, the training is very specific, and people will remember more.

2 Don't evaluate Features when doing software comparisons

How do you go about evaluating new software?

Most organizations research software products and evaluate features between software products to see which ones they should choose. This is a time consuming process and features that look interesting may not provide value, whereas others that may not be interesting can improve productivity.

The way to start, is to define the business process and what you want the software to do in order to improve operations. This will tell you what features are helpful and what features are just window dressing. This simplifies the evaluation process, and reduces time and effort to do the evaluation. It can also reduce cost, because you won't buy features that don't have immediate value.

3 Don't collect business requirements

If you ask a software developer how you should start a software project, they will tell you to collect business requirements. They will even tell you this to evaluate software products.

Don't do it!



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When you collect business requirements, you are creating a wish list. The wishes are out of context with how your business operates and how you want to improve operations. Develop your business process and show how the improvements will be achieved.

4 Define the project in terms of Business Outcomes

Most projects to build or buy software end up being technology projects and they have a very high failure rate. Your project should be defined in terms of business outcomes. What kinds of efficiencies do you want to get out of your operation by installing this software? Keep a very strong emphasis on this and making this venture profitable.

Are you trying to improve quality or response time, improve cash flow, reduce costs or improve productivity? Be very specific about this. Consider how you will measure this benefit in terms of changes to your business (business outcomes), results for your customers (benefits) and dollars.

5 Don't buy new software

Most software is terribly underutilized. We use what we need and often forget about the rest. Even products at the low end of the scale such as Quick Books have all kinds of features that most people don't use.

When you buy a new product, you are going through a major change to your business. You will have to train your staff all over again. You will have to redefine what you do. You will get new formats for many things such as invoices, quotes, etc. All of this will take time and effort and it will reduce productivity.

Why do it? Look at existing software and see if you can do more with it. Quite often you can get your old software to do the job, and this means less time and effort and less lost productivity.

Save those big efforts for the times when you have a big benefit to gain. Don't assume that the only costs of buying software are the purchase price. Typically it will cost you 3-4 times as much as the price of the software.

6 Don't struggle with technology. Get a specialist.

If the new software is a major change to your business, then you probably don't have the technical skills to support it. If you have internal staff doing the job, then you will have to upgrade their skills. You can do it by trial and error, but this will cost you in terms of lost time, perhaps lost data, but very definitely in terms of delayed benefits.

Every technician loves to solve technical problems. If your staff are encountering new problems, they will want to solve it themselves. This can cause delays in delivering results.



Get a specialist to help you minimize those delays, so that you get a faster solution. The faster you deliver, the more benefits that you get.

7 Don't abdicate technology to the technicians.

Many business owners and Managers in small business are uncomfortable with technology. When a technician starts talking techno babble, they turn off. As a result, they abdicate their responsibilities to the technical staff.

There is no such thing as a technical problem! There is no such thing as a problem that a businessperson cannot understand!

There are business problems caused by technology failures. There are technicians that don't know how to describe technology failures in terms a businessperson would understand. As a business owner, you have to demand that this is provided to you. The decisions that are made related to these "technical problems" will affect your business. As business owner, you have to ensure that you get the opportunity to make them.

Technicians who are capable of explaining these issues in business terms may be hard to find. You may want to get help from an experienced person that can get you the information that you need.

8 Get support for the process

In a number of tips, I mentioned that your business process is a critical element. The business process is the set of activities that you require to do the job. Although the basic activities are common across most businesses, every business is unique.

The software that you buy comes with a built in business process. Most are very flexible and can be adapted to meet your needs. In some cases, you will have to modify the way you do business in order to get the results that you are looking for.

The approach that is required follows the following steps:

- Describe the existing business process. This gets everybody on the same page. Before you do this everybody will think they know the process. They each will have a different opinion.
- Identify the improvements that you want to make to the process, what results you want to achieve.
- Identify how the software will help you and what you expect the results to be.
- Evaluate software products based on this expectation.
- Train people on the functions that will get what you want done.



As you can see above, the business process can be used in many ways to help you be successful with your software installation. It's not just the software, it's the business process improvements that will help you get the business results that you want.

Improving business process takes a certain mindset and a lot of experience. Unless you have these skills, consider getting someone with experience to help you do it. But don't get them to do it for you.

9 Summary

Changing software will have a major impact on your business. That is normally what you are looking for, but the impact can be positive or negative.

It is negative when it takes too long, costs more than you have planned or doesn't achieve the business benefits that you are looking for.

Hopefully, these tips will reduce the pain involved and help you get those results more easily.

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