

# LeadingMile Consulting Top 6 Do's & Don'ts for implementations

White Paper



Welcome to the latest instalment in the LeadingMile series of Whitepapers on Business and Technology Management Consulting. In this series we present the benefit of our experience: what to do and what not to do when it comes to comprehensive change management and complex installations. Please contact us if you would like more information or to discuss how we can assist your organization.

## Introduction

System implementations, business upgrades and inevitable adaptations to technology advances and regulatory & market pressures are a constant in organizations. Many employees can go about their normal day in blissful ignorance of major change management going on behind the scenes...until something goes wrong.

Indeed, a successful implementation is a bit like a top waiter in a high-end restaurant. The expected service is delivered without fault, but they are hardly noticed.

We know as change management consultants, that the complexities of implementations and the impact they can have across an organization are substantial. That is why it needs proper project and consulting management to ensure these changes can be delivered on time, on budget and delivering the improvements they were meant to bring.

Here are our top 6 recommendations for complex implementations, the items many companies say they wish they knew, and that our clients highlight as areas they are most grateful for our support.

### 1. Business readiness

An organization decides to upgrade a core aspect of their company's operations. The software vendor is delighted to have made the sale. But they presume their clients have gone through a thorough business readiness phase by the time they make the purchase.

Inevitably they have not or not sufficiently in line with what is required.

The first tip is to ensure the scope and use of the software modules are agreed upon in the Statement of Work. It pays off to invest in documenting this well. Beyond this, requirements need to be clear and from there it gets more complex. Solution design, technical architecture, resourcing, all need to be defined, proposed, agreed and up and running.

Without all this a company can be on the back foot and behind schedule before they have even started.

### 2. Timelines

Implementation timelines are often underestimated. Sometimes through optimistic sales people, but also due to top down setting budget and timelines. This puts pressure on everyone for the duration of the project.

When you are at Proof of Concept and everyone is trying to sell this important enhancement internally and externally, this is when you need to invest the time, get detailed and be realistic. It is a sound investment to put sufficient time in creating a sound planning structure as early on as possible, to determine the implementation, the roll out framework and way of working. This may take some time but the execution plan is essential to stay in control and will both manage expectations and save time long term.

No one wants to be reporting to management that they are behind schedule, especially when this is due to the signed-off plan not being sufficiently thorough.

Insight: many software vendors will underestimate their impact on the broader organization. Their model planning is usually very tight and you need to build in specific company factors that may impact realistic timelines.

### 3. Customization

Before a company gets into full implementation realizing just how complex implementation is, many firms are drawn to customizing their new enhancements.

Our advice is beware and try not to fall into this trap. Try to minimize any customizations.

A practical reason for this is that many programmes limit their support to a limited number of months or years for a release. This means clients need to upgrade on a regular basis, especially if they want to stay current with the latest technological developments. If you have made considerable customizations, these will need to be tested and adjusted every upgrade cycle. It can also have knock on effects to other parts of the programme or the broader business operating system. This may eventually lead companies to stop upgrading and losing their technological edge.

It has to be remembered that often it is the business side is where the main challenges are. This is where we focus a lot of our support, partnering to assure client success.

### 4. Right People Right Place

Get the right Project Manager in place who has delivered major implementations and change management before. Particularly if they know the implementation framework and resource scheduling.

When staffing the project or programme, don't try to combine too much with day to day functions. This is a false economy we see where both functions end up not being done properly and the implementation falls behind schedule. A solid base of fully dedicated resources is essential to complete the project on time and within budget.

Ensure there are sufficient well-trained resources lined up to embed the knowledge during the handover of the project to the line organization. Training is more than just 'navigating' the system.

But most importantly, pick the right integration partner. The right mix of internal and external expert knowledge will be needed. Not in the least to complement and counterbalance any vendor resources.

### 5. System Reporting

Training internal resources to be fully self-sufficient in the use of the new system and its reporting tools is often underestimated and can easily take 6 to 12 months. Companies need to determine whether they would like to develop this capability internally or whether to leave this with the vendor.

We always advise our clients to start well ahead of time and allocate qualified dedicated people.

Experience counts: With any IT implementation, from any providers, if you are implementing a relatively new product they, and you, will be relatively inexperienced. That's where external people,

experts in business and technology, can make a strong impact. Process and project protocol with a strong project lead will be essential.

### **6. Data Migration and Interfacing- from planning to implementation**

This is the serious end of the upgrade. Before a new system can be fully implemented all that data, which your company has built up over so many years, must be migrated over to the new system. Data migration is another critical area that is often underestimated. Did you know in asset management most clients require 15+ years of history to reflect the IRR correctly- that is a lot of data to transfer. Add to that the complexity of the data structures, sourcing, translations and data cleansing and you are in for a long ride.

Make sure this is a repeatable process and that you have the right tooling to facilitate cut over (and interfacing).

Of course this is just scratching the surface. The outputs of system upgrades are usually highly anticipated, the process if implantation though can be costly and stressful without the support of experts.

## Next steps

So now you know what to consider.

The key takeaways are:

- *Don't underestimate timelines and complexities*
- *Make sure you invest time in preparation*
- *Engage external professionals and benefit from their expertise and experience*

If any of this sounds like your company please contact us. We have an enviable track record of successfully implementing the most complex systems in the largest corporations, navigating change management and coordinating between the company and the vendor. Our holistic approach means clients save time and money and end up with a great result. We would like to help your company as well.

[www.leadingmile.com](http://www.leadingmile.com)

LeadingMile is an exciting and market changing management consultancy. We aim to revolutionize the market delivering business and technology solutions across financial services. We deliver practical, holistic and robust solutions to complex integrations and accompanying change management.