



AVOID THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES

in your Next Technology Implementation

Retail technology implementations are complex, to put it mildly. Whether you're upgrading an existing

app or implementing an entirely new system, there are new processes to plan and consider, vendors to track, budgets and timelines to follow, and internal expectations to manage. In the midst of this whirlwind, it's easy to overlook things that, if not addressed early, can become big problems as the project progresses.

Mistake #1: Missing the "all in" budget

Everyone has a budget for a technology project, but it often doesn't account for everything that's needed for a successful implementation. You might have the cost of the base application and modifications, but have you considered:

- All of the manual work needed from your team?
- The flows that need to happen from end to end?
- The testing required for IT, your other systems, and the users of the new technology?
- Customizations? Few technologies will address your needs straight out of the box.

Questions like these are important for understanding the entire business process required to make your project a reality. Look at the total impact of your project and account for everyone's time and cost. Lots of organizations have the "Get it done NOW!" mentality which causes everyone to rush the process and set unrealistic expectations about what's actually needed to make the project successful.

Why does this happen? (and how to avoid it)

The root cause is usually a lack of knowledge about how retail technology implementations work. You may not realize the true scope of the project's time and team effort, or you may not know the right questions to ask of your technology vendor.

To avoid this common mistake, be aware of and honest about your company's experience. It's ok to admit that you don't know what you don't know! Bring in a system integrator (SI) to manage the implementation and act as a strategic advisor to your team. A good SI should be asking thorough questions at the beginning of the project so you are aligned on resources, skillsets and budget that will make your project a success. They can also help you build out an "all in" budget that covers every piece that will need to happen during the implementation, as well as what's realistic for operating and maintaining the technology after the go-live.



Mistake #2: Minimizing change management

It's one thing to put a system into production, it's another to know how you're going to run it, support it, on-board users, keep it up to date, and evolve it as business needs change.

Another common implementation mistake is failing to ask the big-picture questions that drive your change management plan and help ensure the long-term success of the project. Sometimes teams assume someone has the core questions answered, but that may not be the case!

- Why are we doing this project?
- What problems or opportunities are driving it?
- How does it advance our business goals?
- What does it mean for the long-term position of the business?

Let's look at a straightforward example: Your implementation project is an Oracle database and Java application, but your IT team is made up of SQL server and .net people. In this case, you don't have the right core skills or technologies for supporting the project after the implementation vendors leave. But if no one raises their hand to ask this basic question about skillsets (and often no one does!), you have a crisis soon after the go-live.

A lack of change management preparation can have a ripple effect across the organization in terms of confusion, inefficiency errors and lack of buy-in in leveraging the system. You end up spending time and money on a great system but you make assumptions about things that, in the end, the business can't use in practice or that don't make sense for your larger objectives. Ask the fundamental questions early in the project so you can make sure the work is aligned with your business goals and resources.

Why does this happen? (and how to avoid it)

If the project is being driven from an IT side and those stakeholders don't seek out a common business stakeholder, the project risks getting disproportionately focused on IT and application-sorts of things, thereby missing the business needs or business benefits that will make the project successful

- What's the human impact of the project? How will people's daily tasks change?
- How are you communicating changes and expectations?
- Do you have the right skillsets and people in place?

Frankly, most teams don't have a high level of experience or the right tools to put a change management plan into effect. The result is a lot of time and money spent on a great system, but because business assumptions were made without the involvement of business stakeholders, it can't be used to its full potential or it doesn't make sense in the grand scheme of the business.

To avoid this, it's extremely important that stakeholders from across the business be involved from the start. Once again, a good SI should ask you these business questions early in the process to make sure everyone understands the larger drivers and objectives.

Mistake #3: Forgetting about the end users

It's not uncommon for an organization to envision and implement a big important project, only to have it fizzle when it's rolled out to the team. This often happens if the right people aren't involved in the project from the start.

Involving teams from the field or the stores is imperative for a retail technology implementation. They should understand what you're trying to do and why, and be allowed to give input on it. Otherwise you risk building something that doesn't



actually support the work, responsibilities or expectations of the people who are accountable for using it.

Your IT team should be part of that "end user" bucket when planning what happens after the go-live. This is especially important in terms of setting realistic training requirements. If you want IT to be self-sufficient a month after the go-live, but they're not involved until the last 30 days, then you jeopardize the entire project (even with the best implementation).

Why does this happen? (and how to avoid it)

If IT or other teams assume they know the day-to-day workings of the stores or the end-users, there will almost certainly be gaps between how the end users want interact with the technology and how they "should" interact with it.

Early in the planning process, decide what level of involvement you need from which teams. Spell out what the teams need to own and what's realistic for getting them there. Doing this in the early days of the work will also inform the "all in" budget discussed above. Avoid any sort of assumptions about how the technology will actually be used; instead, get direct input from the end-user stakeholders.

Once again, your system integrator should be facilitating these types of proactive conversations. Rather than simply responding to what you tell them to do, a good SI will be thorough in their questioning of your objectives, plans and preparedness.

Knowing is half the battle

It's hard to anticipate problems if your organization doesn't have deep experience with technology projects. But being aware of the most common mistakes can be half the battle when it comes to avoiding them. Working with your system integrator, you can ensure a more successful project by planning realistically for costs and timelines, preparing your team for change, and involving the right people.



THE BOTTOM LINE



A system's sticker price doesn't equal the implementation price



Ask the fundamental WHY questions



Involve the end users at the beginning of the project, not the end

About BTM Global

We provide retail system integration and development services for clients ranging from small regional chains to the world's most recognized brands. We believe you should have a partner with diverse expertise, and that's why our teams are built strategically with depth and breadth of knowledge.

Through development, implementation, support and strategic technology planning, we offer a holistic perspective of your long-term needs to help you succeed and grow. Our creative approaches to your challenges mean you get well-rounded, sustainable solutions for your needs.

The result? Our clients are set up for success today and have an infrastructure to support their long-term business goals. It's why they return to us again and again to help solve new challenges.

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