Sunrise®

10 Top Tips

for getting more from
your software project

1 Outline what you want to achieve

Before you get started you need to decide exactly what it is that you want to achieve. What are your goals and what do you want to get from your software? Once you have a fixed vision of what you need and what you want from your project it is much easier to keep things on track – if it isn't going to help you achieve your vision then it isn't vital to the project and you shouldn't allow it to eat into your budget or your timescales.

2 Review internal policies and procedures

Make sure that everything is in place to ensure that the timescales you want to work towards are achievable with the help of a review of your internal processes. Red tape has a wonderful way of holding up projects, and this needs to be accounted for.

3 Don't forget the day job

When estimating timescales, don't forget that people also have their day jobs to do – if this isn't allowed for, then your project can easily take a lot longer than originally anticipated.

4 Roles and responsibilities

Define who is going to be responsible for what, who your key stakeholders are and who is ultimately Project Manager and accountable for all final decisions (this is even more important if you have a project running across multiple departments, who has final say so? Decide up-front to avoid confusion and problems).

You can either select someone internally to be Project Manager or hire externally, but ideally, whoever you choose, should have some experience of managing projects of a similar scope. Project Managers are responsible (and accountable) for any 'scope creep' i.e. a project running over budget or over schedule – the more experienced they are, the smoother the project.

5 Rubbish in, rubbish out

If your project includes data of any kind then it is vital that time, money and effort is allocated to cleaning this up. Any old or out-of-date data which is used will only stop your system from performing well – meaning that your investment hits a stumbling block from the very beginning.

6 Internal buy-in

Make sure that throughout the project you communicate well with any key stakeholders – especially those who will be users, it is vital to get their buy-in in order for your project to be a success.

7 Don't underestimate

It is really important that when planning your project, that you are realistic about the time it will take to complete a task (don't forget to take tip 2 and 3 into account). Do a bit of research beforehand, and then set the timescales. It is always better to overestimate than underestimate, after all would you prefer to have your project come in under budget or over – underestimating the time it will take to complete tasks will only ever result in more expense.

8 Test, test, test and test again

Testing is key to a successful project, but the vital point is that you need to test to your own possible scenarios – make the tests you run relevant to your organisation, come up with a list of possible scenarios and just keep on testing. It is not going to help you to test to scenarios which will just never happen in your environment.

9 Go-live success is in your hands

Ultimately a successful go-live is in your hands (with the support of your software partner) making sure that all users are fully trained, that quick-guides are available for easy reference and that internal communications are in place.

10 Project round-up

Once you have gone live it is important to have a round-up with your chosen software partner, a bit of time dedicated to looking back on what worked, what didn't and any lessons learnt will really help both you and your partner for future projects.

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