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Whitepaper

Planning for Success: The do's and don'ts of planning your eDM project

Stuart Evans, Chief Technical Officer, Invu

Introduction

This paper covers the implementation of a new Document Management (eDM) or Content Management (ECM) system. Its purpose is to set out a series of checks and actions. Like most IT choices and implementations this project will be as much about change management as the software. Consequently, there is plenty of standard project planning advice, but this is mixed with domain specific pointers. The two are distinguished throughout. If you have a qualified project manager in place then you'll only need to review the domain related items.

This paper was originally issued as a series of three papers, each of which relates to a key stage:

Stage 1 - Before

This paper relates to the pre-sales stage i.e. up until the software purchase decision is made. It highlights the key elements you should be aware of in your search for the solution which is right for your organisation.

Stage 2 - During

Paper 2 concentrates on the period between the purchase decision and your solution becoming operational. Once you've made your choice, there will be key preparation work necessary. If choosing the right solution is important, this is just as critical since it will be putting the flesh on the bones of your new system and configuring it to suit the way that you work or, if you are using this as a catalyst for change, the way that you want to work. It will shape working practices and work with you, but, without appropriate staff buy-in, you could create a barrier to adoption. Be prepared to allocate time, maybe funds but definitely concentrated effort to get this right. Unlike a copy of say, Microsoft Office or Sage 50, most eDM and ECM systems are not shrink-wrap software, but requires configuration to work well.

Stage 3 - After

Paper 3 covers the easily neglected area of post-deployment activity. Keeping on top of the implementation, monitoring the way your staff are working, dealing with any snagging early on and planning for any subsequent project phases are covered here.

Whether your organisation is large or small, these stages will all need to be considered. The extent to which you action them will be a factor of size and complexity. Throughout this documents there will be some sections which will be flagged up as potentially not relevant to the small business. However, it is recommended that you take your own view on this.

This document includes a series of Do's and Don'ts headings. These are based on best practice and experience. In some cases these are abbreviated – there are enough project management articles and books available so this assumes some knowledge and follow-up if you want to go into more detail. Some will not be relevant to your deployment so please don't take this list as Gospel.

Stage I: Before

This is the planning and preparation stage. During this stage you will define your selection criteria, engage with your primary stakeholders and establish your acceptance criteria. Before starting any journey involving new systems or processes you need a clear idea of the issues you are looking to solve. Establishing your objectives upfront will always help crystalise your thinking and decision making.

Initial Business Case (Project)

Do challenge the business needs. After all, you will always have to know what your business case is and proving it out is good discipline. If it's absolutely clear-cut then this will be very simple. However, if you are likely to meet serious challenge you'll have to put some real rigor into this exercise to ensure that your project gets off the ground. Wherever possible, try and quantify the need – what savings or additional revenues can be expected as a result of this project? You will need this when establishing the ROI against the project spend. At this stage the business case is a first pass sanity check; when you have more information on your requirements, the selected product fit, the cost, risks and viability you'll need to revisit this and reassess matters.

Do create a Terms of Reference. The initial business case will cover the following – effectively an outline Terms of Reference (ToR) or Project Initiation Document:

Basic ToR contents	Additional ToR contents
Business objectives/opportunities	Fit to business needs/ strategic alignment
Value Proposition - Desired business outcomes	Dependencies Assumptions Constraints Risks
Deliverables	Open questions
Costs/ROI Financial scenarios	Organisational areas impacted
Key stakeholders	Sponsor(s)
Success criteria	

Figure 1: Terms of Reference contents

At this stage, most of the business case will be placeholders – for the initial assessment you should aim to complete the Basic ToR as a minimum. By the time your final software solution is made you should have a robust supporting business case covering most of not all of the contents above.

Governance (Project)

Do establish project ownership. Larger projects will include a project board (the sponsors) to whom any deviance from plan on grounds of cost, timeliness or risk will be referred. A project owner will assume responsibility for execution, often aided by a team. This is the project manager (PM).

The PM will provide regular progress updates to the project board. The PM should also escalate to the project board for guidance where there are deviances from timelines, budget, abnormal risks or issues which have crystallised.

The PM should also report back to the project board at every key milestone – PRINCE2 uses project stages as these reporting points. As a minimum, it's here where questions of project feasibility should always be faced.

This may sound like overkill – in any small eDM/ECM deployment much of this will be done informally through good everyday communications. Governance may vary by level of ceremony and the extent of the paperwork, but establishing who owns what and where the buck stops is an essential first step of even the simplest of projects. A simple shared action list will suffice in many cases just to ensure that ownership is clear.

✓ **Do challenge viability throughout.** A golden rule of any project is to continually assess if the project will deliver on its goals (i.e. the deliverables) and to determine if the project remains feasible – it may be pointless delivering if the project is too risky, disruptive or costly. As a minimum challenge at every reporting point by asking, "Is this project still viable?" If the answer to this simple question is "No" then be prepared to assess how to make it viable or to abort the project and limit any budgetary or operational impact.

Stakeholders & Expectations (Project)

✓ **Do identify and work with your stakeholders.** The importance of recruiting and taking on board the input of staff and other stakeholders cannot be underestimated. This source will ratify your project, champion it and, in all likelihood, determine its success. You should already have a clear view on the deliverables. The stakeholders will bring this into sharper operational focus. They will also enable you to set expectations and to use them to cascade these throughout the business. These expectations should be realistic and maybe even cautious – avoid shooting for the moon and ending in relative failure. Instead, there may be mileage in reigning in internal expectation whilst keeping hard targets for vendors. Once you have established the business expectations these should be communicated to staff to build buy-in, aid preparation and avoid misrepresentation.

✗ **Don't manage by committee.** In larger projects there can be a tendency towards over-manning and this can lead a committee run exercise liable to flounder through bureaucracy, lack of decision-making ability, squabbles or politicking. There is a balance to be struck. Better to select a small number of key owners that is actively engaged throughout.

This group will be important at all points during the project and beyond. Both the project board and project manager will require input and validation from the selected stakeholders. If the number of stakeholders is too high, then it is recommended that those from similar functions are streamlined, with a nominee from the functional area acting as the primary port of call.

✗ **Don't just recruit managers.** A worthwhile tip is to identify the functions which will be affected by the eDM/ECM implementation from day to day operational users to those who will reap the performance benefits and those who will implement the solution. Once identified, stakeholder areas can be prioritised. This ensures that the key area's requirements are identified – possibly a delicate task which the project sponsor may wish to take on board.

The stakeholder community may evolve throughout the project lifecycle – for example, vendors and deployment partners may be invited into the fold. This is good practice and typical of successful projects where open communications and expectations are clearly felt and understood by all parties. Where compromises or prioritisation decisions are needed this is greatly aided if the project is run on inclusive lines.

✓ **Do keep your stakeholders involved.** Stakeholders established, they should be included at all stages, from establishing requirements, to vendor selection or ratification, user acceptance testing and championing when the solution is operational. If there is one thing that will ensure a failed software project or desultory adoption it is failure to identify, recruit and listen to appropriate stakeholders.

✓ **Do include your IT staff.** Whoever you use to run your IT infrastructure, be it in-house or outsourced, ensure that they are included in the selection and roll out processes. This critical and valuable stakeholder community can easily make or break a project.

The IT department/outsource ensures that the solution will work with your current or intended technology and will not detrimentally impact other internal systems

This is as important as the project board defining the overall strategic purpose and project parameters or the business stakeholders determining the solution's functionality and operational impact.

However, a note of caution. There are many examples of overzealous IT departments solutionisation for the organisation without an intimate understanding of the business drivers – there needs to be a careful balance between the business needs and ensuring that the technology is supportive and not restrictive.

Do identify your requirements. Having determined the problems, you can draw up the product requirements. A series of informal interviews with the stakeholders and their functional areas works well here.

Don't over-elaborate. It helps to challenge each requirement. Why is it needed? What is the benefit? If it is quantifiable, then this gives it a major advantage in getting past this gate keeping exercise. Agreeing a benefit also enables you to give it a sense of priority – a simple scoring system is recommended for each.

Do make sure that you cover the main topics. At this stage it's easy to think about what you want the chosen product to do. Whilst this is important the main aim is to extract what it is you need your solution to do to fulfil your business need i.e. the what rather than the how. Consider the following headline areas:

Requirements	Remarks
Strategic requirements	i.e. in line with the organisation's wider aspirations and goals. This is likely to invoke some key parameters and will be high priority
Operational requirement	This will be every day usage and will correlate with product functionality
Integration requirements	What applications does the chosen solution need to integrate with?
Automation opportunities	Documents and content are often the tangible artefacts that drive or reflect your business. Physical documents can slow down even the most straightforward of processes. Automating data capture or workflow processes may create greater than expected savings and opportunities.
IT requirements	The solution must fit with the technology aims of the business e.g. Microsoft stack/fits with SharePoint/ must work with Fujitsu scanners
Non functional requirements	For example ease of use, security requirements, scalability etc.
Exclusions	It's important to make these explicit e.g. we won't capture voicemail

Figure 2: : Major requirements headings

Integration & automation (Domain)

Do optimise integration options. The majority of businesses will use key software packages embedded into the operation, be it ERP, accounts, CRM or business specific applications. Depending on how electronic these systems are (e.g. manual versus automated payment systems) documents will be a core part of normal processing – either directly or as ancillary information. For pure efficiency gains, the ability to access related documents as a natural part of everyday processing is hard to beat. Integration with your line of business applications will reap rewards, especially if the application is in constant use rather than peripheral.

Integration from the main application may come in a number of forms – menu access, maybe additional toolbars or via context menus. Optimising speed of access is the key here and where the line of business application is heavily used you can expect to see disproportionate integration benefits. Opportunities will vary by eDM/ECM – some are more customisable than others and others may require additional work which may be chargeable.

Do automate. Automation need not be completely under the bonnet. Where there is paper involved the process can involve relatively mundane solutions, most notably barcodes.

Where documents are produced from the business they can be barcode stamped and recognised on receipt, saving time on matching and minimising human error. Image capturing and recognition technology is mature and well proven, enabling the automation of many manual documentation processes.

Not only will high quality software import documents into your eDM, but it will also recognise documents originating from your business and populate key metadata.

Once held in the Document Management repository the document can be initiated into a workflow process, say an invoice authorisation. Likewise, e-mail integration is a potential quick win for escalation into a workflow process. Review your processes and look at the bottlenecks, delays and error prone areas. Exploring this and reviewing options with vendors may result in a transformational change to your processes, especially where there is heavy operational traffic (e.g. SOP/ POP/ POD[1] processes).

Don't forget your scanning options. Integration can apply just as much to the infrastructure, notably when it comes to capturing and processing paper documents. The majority of businesses of any size will use Multi- Function Devices (MFDs) to print, photocopy, scan and maybe even fax. The throughput of such hardware can be very high and harnessing these with suitable capture technologies will give massive improvement in processing speeds. Implementation of an eDM/ECM represents a timely opportunity to review your MFD capabilities and consider how the inputs into your eDM are achieved.

Solution selection process (Domain)

Do work through a structured process. Having established the requirements to be satisfied you should have a mechanism against which to measure the candidates. In a crowded market you will need to have done some homework to establish viable options. A standard approach begins with a set of simple headline criteria – ideally this will be culled from your requirements exercise and augmented by budgetary and scalability constraints. Armed with this you'll need to undertake a sweep-through of the marketplace to identify initial candidates.

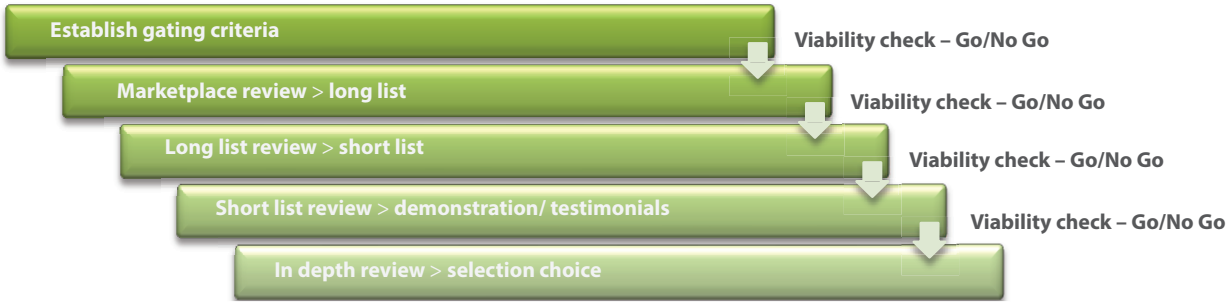

Figure 3: Outline solution section process

Do consider the following sources:

- Personal recommendation – although their requirements may not exactly match yours, it's worth asking suppliers, partners and others in your industry what software solutions they use
- Industry/ professional body recommendation or endorsement
- Google for Document Management software, eDM, ECM, Content Management etc.
- AIIM – the Enterprise Content Management association. (http://www.aiim.org/)

Do narrow down your candidates. The long list will reflect your own stamina, but it is unlikely to comprise more than, say, 12 vendors. At this stage you'll use broad filters e.g. approximate fit to your budget. (If you enter the detailed scoring phase with the big expensive hitters and a small budget you'll be in for a lot of wasted time and effort).

More detailed analysis will lead to this being whittled down to a short list which will be no more than 3-5 candidates. The pruning process will enable you to bring more key criteria to bear as selection filters.

Once you have a short list you will be in good shape to engage fully with prospective providers. This is where product demonstrations will begin, either face to face or remotely. Be prepared and don't be tempted to rush the process. However, with a defined list of requirements the process should be streamlined and effective.

1.Sales Order Processing, Purchase Order Processing & Proof of Delivery

Solution selection scoring (Project)

Do use a scoring method. When reviewing software, it is advisable to do so against your requirements criteria. Ideally, for each solution you will score how the software fits against each requirement. When RFPs are returned by vendors they may be subject to a little optimistic fine tuning – when reviewing applications a scoring mechanism allows you more than a simple Yes or No. If you opt for the RFP route then ensure that vendors use your scoring criteria.

Requirement description	**Score** 1-5, 5=highest	**Notes**
Fully supported – well executed	5	
Fully supported – acceptably executed	4	
Partially supported – acceptably executed	3	
Partially supported – degraded functionality from requirement	2	
Some functionality	1	
Not supported	0	

Figure 4: Suggested scoring approach

There is still some subjectivity involved here but the approach adds a little science to a process that could be potentially divisive. By referencing priorities and the level of support, it is straightforward to score the solution under review. Do so with your stakeholders if possible – once again this cements buy-in to the final selection decision.

Ref	Requirement description	Priority 1-3,1=highest	Score 1-5, 5=highest	Total Max score=25	Notes
012	The application shall be capable of integration with Sage accounts system	3	5	15	Search options available from 2 main screens only.

Figure 5: Example scored requirement

With a series of scored results the overall product fit will emerge. Comparing vendors only on, say, your highest priorities initially will avoid skewing based on an accumulation of strengths in lesser priority areas. Where the scores are very close between vendors, other factors can be bought into play e.g. lower priority requirement fits. When you have a set of comparison scores these should shared with the stakeholders and fine-tuned as necessary.

Solution selection (Project)

Do seek validation. You should now be faced with one or two product based front-runners. Testimonials should be sought, including recent implementations, ideally for similar environments, industry areas and organisational size. Each of these may require a testimonial and 2-3 should be sought as a minimum, either via a telephone call or face to face if possible.

Do undertake proof of concept trials. This is particularly relevant where there is scanning recognition with existing forms, automation or integration to be delivered. Undertaking this validation prior to a final selection from your short list or as a key success factor in the deliverables you agree with your vendor will ensure that you do not make an expensive mistake. Typically this will involve some investment up front.

Do take IT implications into account. There may be additional hardware purchases necessary or sharing of resources on existing infrastructure which may impact on performance or security. Throughout the process the IT department or outsource organisation should be on board and an assessment of the technology fit of the new solution should be delivered as part of the final proposal to the project board.

The application shall be capable of integration with Sage accounts system

Don't forget to allow budgetary contingency. So far we've deliberately ignored the thorny issue of costs and kept the process needs-based and pure. However, in parallel, you will also have quotes from your prospective suppliers. If it is not a SaaS offering, then, unlike shrink-wrap or downloadable software, the eDM/ECM software you choose is likely to include a consultancy or professional services element. Watch out here – you'll need to establish the basis for this. If you agree a time and materials basis then this can escalate. However, to be fair to the vendor you will need to provide enough information to enable a practical estimate to be given.

In order to break this potential deadlock you may need to undertake a proof of concept trial. This will give some clearer ideas of the configuration and enable you to shape the implementation stage of the project. This part of the project will inevitably require some budget contingency – depending on your level of optimism factor in anything between 25% & 100% for consultancy overrun. This may not be necessary, but better to mitigate any overrun in advance than begin on the back foot when the project goes live.

With a product score, technology impact, testimonials and quotes in place you should now be ready to deliver a recommendation to the project board or sponsor.

In the event of a more formal governance then the Terms of Reference will have been worked up from it's basic format by now and this will complete your recommendation pack to the project board.

Scale of adoption (Project)

Do determine a rate of implementation that works to your goals. Should you implement by stages across departments in the organisation? Should you undertake a whole roll out? You may get a better deal for purchasing for a mass deployment but it will require greater operational commitment and risk. If you take a staged approach, be sure to agree criteria to move to the next level of implementation e.g. successful and signed off use of the solution by, say, the finance department.

Alternatively, the solution you choose may be modular. It may make adoption and roll out more straightforward if the modules are taken on board in stages. Some of these may be inter-related so would require appropriate phasing.

Stage 1 Conclusion

Stage 1 is heavy on planning. It lays a foundation for a robust solution choice and the baseline for the next stage. Formulating the business need and functional requirements enables you to validate your choice. It also prepares the ground for its implementation. Progressing from software selection to a solid deployment and operational roll out is the topic of Stage 2.

Stage 2: During

This stage covers the transition from the purchase decision to using the solution operationally. The preparation of the Before stage will be well rewarded, notably in establishing your requirements and working through the benefits you are seeking. Be warned though – you will need to invest time into this stage to ensure that your configuration is a good fit. Although it's not a one –shot exercise, the configuration of some systems is difficult to undo. Better to get it right first time and augment over time if necessary.

Stakeholders (Project)

✔ **Do review your stakeholders.** This is where the operational work begins. A blend of in-house practical knowledge and higher level strategic based input will be needed. This is particularly appropriate for defining your taxonomies and user acceptance testing (UAT). These will also be your operational champions for stage 3.

The dynamic of your stakeholder group will change at this stage also since you will have a vendor involved. The most successful deployments occur when there are clear requirements and clean lines of communication between customer and vendor. This entails a high degree of trust – you'll be working closely with each other henceforth.

✔ **Do assess staff concerns.** There is also a softer element to consider. Finding out the concerns of those staff that will be using the solution will reap dividends. This will help you plan configuration changes and, more likely, operational alterations. If these concerns are acted upon then user acceptance will also be much smoother.

Expectations (Project)

✔ **Do be prepared to undertake staged implementations.** This applies not only in terms of your total roll out, but during your configuration. By taking an hour or two to test out a potential set-up prior to full implementation will gain you confidence. Simple proof of concept trials will ensure that you have a practical solution and not something which only works on the drawing board. These mini-trials are particularly helpful in identifying unknown issues which would otherwise arise at test time or, even worse, during live use.

✔ **Do confirm deliverables.** A Statement of Work (SOW) setting out the precise deliverables is a must. By confirming what you expect to be delivered and what the vendor believes will be deployed you will clear up potentially expensive frustrations early on. The SOW should list out all deliverables clearly and unambiguously. This is your informal contract. If both sides set out the non deliverables as well this creates further clarity – sometimes it's what's left unsaid which causes the biggest headaches.

✔ **Do set out your success criteria.** Although these may be more intangible, setting out what you will and won't accept will give the vendor clear parameters to work with. Ideally each criterion will be measurable e.g. performance measures may be " finding a sample document should take no more than 5 seconds on average."This can then form part of your User Acceptance Testing later in the project.

Taxonomies – some background (Domain)

Taxonomy (noun) - *(from Greek taxis meaning arrangement or division and nomos meaning law) is the science of classification according to a pre-determined system, with the resulting catalog used to provide a conceptual framework for discussion, analysis, or information retrieval. In theory, the development of a good taxonomy takes into account the importance of separating elements of a group (taxon) into subgroups (taxa) that are mutually exclusive, unambiguous, and take n together,include all possibilities. In practice, a good taxonomy should be simple, easy to remember, and easy to use.* [2]

2. http://searchcio-midmarket.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid183_gci331416,00.html#

eDM and ECM systems not only allow you to search on stored document content (i.e. full text) but augment this by the addition of attribute data.

For example, definition of what a document type is (say an invoice or cv or a specification), document properties (e.g. author, subject, reference, values) and even location grouping (i.e. folders). This augmentation enables greater flexibility than simply hunting for key phrases with deep text searching. Filtering and grouping allow you to gain a sense of related documents and themes and open up more knowledge based discovery.

Taxonomy Definition (Domain)

The configuration of your eDM/ECM solution will be a major determinant in it success.

✗ **Don't over-elaborate.** Many unsuccessful deployments fall foul not through their taxonomies being limited but by being complex. The benefit of an optimal configuration is the lightness of touch when being used operationally. Seek to minimise any manual data entry or, even better remove the need altogether. For example, set a limit of, say, a maximum of 3 attributes for any document.

✓ **Do explore options for automation.** Ideally, you'll automate much of the data capture elements of your eDM/ECM. In fact, these opportunities should be actively sought, whether via integration with your line of business applications or via your scanning and capture route.

However, some manual input is bound to be necessary at times. If this creates additional effort which disrupts normal operations then this will be bypassed or, if completed, lead to disaffection and reduced efficiency.

✓ **Do work closely with your supplier.** Your vendor will be a potential source of experience and domain knowledge. Gauging the balance between a fully detailed configuration and speed of use can be achieved with close consultation with your supplier. Working up the requirements at the preparation stage and paring them back by virtue of the business case for each demand will have revealed where you want to see the benefits and directed your solution choice. Once again these requirements will come into play when you begin to define the taxonomy. The supplier will work with you to extract this information and shape the configuration. Ideally, you will work closely with the stakeholders and the functional area champions during this phase. Their input will reflect activity at ground level and therefore usability and, in so doing, increase the odds of uptake by their peers.

✓ **Do keep it simple.** Once again, don't be tempted to make the properties, document types, folders etc. too complicated or you'll pay a high price in operational burden. Be prepared to prioritise and prune or, at the very least, limit the number of mandatory fields.

When the taxonomies have been defined undertake a review. (Better still, if you can establish a proof of concept trial you can validate based on experience rather than theory). At this stage the stakeholders can sign off the configuration. Only then should you implement them.

IT deployment (Project)

The IT stakeholders will be responsible for ensuring that hardware, configuration and software are implemented without impact on the rest of the business. Allow time for this and work closely with your vendor to ensure that any solution vagaries are catered for without knock-on effects.

✓ **Do quarantine.** This is basic risk management - if you can implement your eDM/ECM on discrete infrastructure then do so. Prior to operational use, keep it away from the business domain(s) and servers in order to give time and space for implementation and validation to take place. This will ensure that in the unlikely event of a significant deployment hitch that the operational business is not affected.

At the point that the eDM/ECM goes live it is advisable to 1) do so out of hours (weekends are best) and 2) ensure that there is stakeholder sign off prior to formal "office hours" availability.

This should take the form of a shortened acceptance test and validation that all related live systems continue to work as normal. Do be prepared to delay deployment if there is any cross contamination between systems or performance.

Integration & Automation (Domain)

In Stage 1 we introduced these two key opportunities. Both represent major deliverables which, well done, will deliver disproportionate benefits. However, they will be embedded into your day-to-day operational process so they cannot be disruptive.

Do undertake proof of concept trials. Always, always undertake a trial of the automation and integration options. Validate that this is what you want and what is being built meets your needs, even if this slows down the implementation. Ideally, you should build interim validation steps into your project plan timescales.

Operational Planning (Domain)

Standard operational procedure updates

Do consider the operational impact of your new system. If your organisation has a series of standard operating procedures (SOPs) then many of them will need updating. Documentation is all-pervasive and will have to be saved and retrievable via the new solution. Depending on the scale of your initial roll-out, the changes could therefore be wide ranging across the organisation.

Identification of SOP impacts will be a task throughout the project.

Stage	Personnel	Notes
Requirements gathering	Selection stakeholders	
Solution selection	Selection stakeholders	
Solution configuration (taxonomies etc.)	Selection stakeholders + vendor advice	
SOP impact workshops	Operational stakeholders	
User Acceptance Testing (UAT)	Operational stakeholders	Including "champions"
Post deployment SOP reviews	SOP owners	Including "champions"

Figure 6: SOP impact data gathering points

As part of your validation during the UAT phase, ensure that you capture any changes which will be necessary to your SOPs. Specifically focused workshops with stakeholders will also help to flush these out for inclusion in the updates.

Do lodge your SOPs in the eDM system. Obvious really, but this facilitates usage and familiarisation for even the most infrequent of users and gives users a sense of the importance of the new system to their day-to-day working practices. It also sends out a clear statement of intent that this is not a take-it-or leave-it software roll out.

Email Policy

Do agree on an email policy. Email is an important but potentially tricky area. It certainly cannot be ignored. The same is true of social media and texts to some extent. However, the volume and potential depth of content of emails make this the most significant area outside of paper and Office documents.

Email Policy (Cont.)

Emails need to be preserved for audit trail and even legal purposes. In some organisations the volumes and content of emails is the single most critical communication means for most staff. However, in amongst this volume is internal email of a mundane or trivial nature and even some private notes. (For the purposes of this paper, we'll assume that spam is taken care of already).

In some territories the capture of personally addressed emails is a personal liberty infringement whereas in the UK and US any email entering a business domain will be considered property of the organisation and therefore available for capture. Some systems capture all emails on a blanket basis. Others are more sophisticated and can be handled via discrete rules. Automated capture of anything coming from suppliers, clients or partnership bodies is certainly recommended. Alternatively you may agree a trust-based approach using manual capture at the discretion of the staff member. This is open to human error. This is one area where discussing the options with your vendor and staff is recommended to agree a policy which works for your organisation.

Back scanning policy

Do establish a policy on historical documents. If your organisation receives a lot of paper documentation and it has significant value then you may wish to consider your approach to historical data. This is particularly the case where there are statutory obligations for records retention.

Typical approaches are to start from a set date (the start of a new financial year represents a clean start point), go back one year or even 2-3 years. Back scanning beyond this is unusual. It's likely therefore that you will have a combined paper and electronic archive for some time.

Should you decide to undertake back scanning approach then you'll need to agree a timetable which, ideally, will not interfere with your eDM/ECM initial implementation and bedding in period.

User Acceptance Testing (UAT) (Project)

User acceptance testing (definition) - In software development, user acceptance testing (UAT) is a phase of software development in which the software is tested in the "real world" by the intended audience. [3]

Do test your solution before "go-live". Why? Amongst other reasons there are three primary objectives:

1. To assess the chosen product and configuration
2. To ensure that it will bring benefit to your business
3. To protect your business from potential harm or risk.

In stage 1 we identified the problems to be solved and elicited the key requirements. You should therefore have the information to allow you to test the product. You can generate a formal test script from this, but in its absence the problem statements and requirements can be validated against.

3. http://searchcio-midmarket.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid183_gci836031,00.html#

✓ **Do undertake your testing away from operational systems.** To reiterate: protect live systems it is always advisable to undertake UAT on discrete infrastructure.

✓ **Do test any automation and integration points.** Given the recommendation to keep all UAT away from live systems this may be difficult. However, at some point this will need to be undertaken. Any software "join", especially between different software authors, is liable to be a potential point of failure. Ideally, test systems are a replica of the live environment. This is not always practical. You should therefore look to either stagger the timing of the tests so that this work is subsequent to the product and configuration testing, and implement the links a step at a time or alternatively ring fence the integration and automation tests. This should be by means of out of hours testing (with a full back up/fail over to hand).

✓ **Do undertake a dry-run qualification test prior to UAT.** If your UAT cycle is successful you will have a jump start to your adoption of your new solution. However, if the implementation is not up to scratch or there are show-stopping issues then it could be difficult to recover from any cynicism or disappointment. Having a few key personnel review the proposition in advance and unearthing any major issues which can then be addressed is a valuable safety net.

✓ **Do get your operational stakeholders to undertake the UAT.** This will mean those staff who will have to operate the system. This serves two purposes – firstly, it acts as a transition point to introduce frontline staff to the solution and for them to gain confidence that it will meet their real world business needs. Secondly, because they have an intimate knowledge of the business' operations they are by far the best people qualified to validate the offering. Ideally, you'll include the operational stakeholders who have been involved to date and some fresh input.

Business users should not only review the solution against the planned requirements but also work in both a normal process and ad-hoc style. They should attempt to replicate normal working environment conditions and to try and make the system fail.

By validating against the problem statements and requirements, you should be able to assess if you are confident that your chosen solution will give benefit to the organisation.

✓ **Do learn lessons from the UAT.** Testing your solution will throw up operational implications. Capturing these will provide you with potential implications to be considered for roll out e.g. practical additions for training and factors to be taken into account in any standard operating procedures.

Training (Project)

✗ **Don't skimp on the training.** Good software should be intuitive to use but as complexity increases then so does the need for proper training. Often, even the simplest applications aren't used to the full so to optimise your investment do invest in training. As well as enhancing the level of understanding in the business it will also reinforce the benefits of the system.

By the end of the training no member of staff should need to question the rationale behind the strategic choice and the selection made.

✓ **Do nominate champions & cascade the knowledge.** A cost-effective way of training all staff is a cascade approach or to "train the trainer". If you're not lucky enough to have dedicated in-house training staff then the stakeholders involved to date may be a good place to start. Alternatively, use those who have been involved in the UAT. These champions should undertake in-depth training from the vendor. They also should keep up to date with refresher training as necessary. This approach works well by putting knowledge at local or departmental level. It also allows for the needs and idiosyncrasies of individual functional areas to be catered for and for the training fine-tuned accordingly.

Remember that when selecting our stakeholders and champions those identified were those most familiar with the business and its operation – these are therefore the most probable candidates. However, consider also the human dynamics involved in training. Trainers who are most vibrant and engaging will be more successful than those with similar experience or knowledge – the training has to be relevant, interesting and even entertaining in order to be retained by the trainees.

Do train in bite-sized chunks. Many staff are time constrained. There is also a limit to taking on new information. How many of us have attended expensive training courses only to find that the day job takes over and only a fraction of the training is ever used again? Think of a series of shorter sessions. Limiting initial training to high-level concepts to sell the changes and engage buy-in and focus on the most important information. Restricting the initial tranche of training to the essential skills needed to complete everyday tasks will ensure that the training roll out will be manageable and will keep attendees interested.

Setting out a programme will also mean that those staff who will need to take the deep-dive into the software and domain receive a level of detail which would make other courses longer or frustrate others attendees.

Do set up refresher courses. Many employees will simply learn as they go. However, for occasional users that are more liable to forget the initial training through lack of use and also for new starters it's important to make training available on an ongoing basis. This is especially appropriate when there are major software versions released or the business purchases new modules. Holding regular top-up sessions is useful – quick lunchtime updates often prove successful.

Do set up email groups/ blogs/ "win studies". Cascading new information is a great way to keep staff engaged. Sharing tips, especially where there is a clear win is motivational and encourages adoption. The media doesn't matter – it can be email groups, blogs, twitter. Practical examples where a team member saved time or found critical information quickly or found a neat function once again help foster the benefits and make for take-up. Finally, don't forget to add these all to your eDM/ECM so your training materials and success stories are available to all.

Stage 2 Conclusion

By the close of this stage your solution should be operational. You may have opted for a staged implementation and you have more to follow. However, having validated your choice and confirmed the operational parameters, your base solution should be in place and your staff trained and ready to go.

In the next stage, we examine the potential traps and next steps after the initial roll out...

Stage 3: After

The software is implemented, the training done and the overall solution is operationally ready. Is there anything else to do? Maybe not in an ideal world, but ensuring full adoption and ironing out any snagging will be important elements in making the project a long term success. This stage sets out a few best practices and is broken down into 3 main phases: launch period, bedding-in period and full adoption. Some activities span all these phases. Additionally, there is project related activity as the project is closed down and Operations takes over.

Project activity

Do run a post project review. Post project review (PPR) post implementation reviews, post mortems – whichever label you use, assessing the success or not of your project is an important step in validating the project and its investment, determining follow-on actions and establishing any lessons learnt. Post project reviews (PPRs) allow for formal completion of a project, reinforce the knowledge gained and raise awareness of both successes and mistakes for future projects, even when they are not related.

PPRs should involve the stakeholders and champions that have worked on the project to date. There is also great benefit in running PPRs with end users at the end of the launch phase.

However, it is important that there is no delay – memories fade, even where there are great records and the most successful PPRs happen comparatively hard on the heels of a product implementation or closure.

Successful PPRs share a number of key features:

- They occur in timely fashion
- They include all or most of the key stakeholders
- All stakeholders are given the chance to prepare with suitable guidance provided in advance
- Delivery against the initial success criteria is validated

At the PPR meeting, any agendas are left behind – the PPR is objective and analytical rather than an exercise in allocating blame. This is really important and can take a lot of good chairmanship, even when the project is a complete success.

A simple structure for the PPR itself is a "good, the bad and the ugly" process together with a list of actions.

- "The good" – what went well? What would you repeat in a future roll out or IT project?
- "The bad" – what went badly? What would you avoid for future projects?
- "The ugly" – what worked but could be improved?

Importantly, the validation against the success criteria should be objective and robust. To what extent have the benefits been achieved? This is the single most important element of the PPR.

PRINCE2 sets out a number of trigger areas to consider during the PPR: To what level has the product achieved the benefits expected?

- Is there an identifiable trend of improving benefits?
- Is the product proving to meet quality expectations?
- Is the product as well supported as was expected?
- Are support staff happy with what they have been given to support the product?

Do generate a Lessons Learnt report. Major projects will incorporate a detailed wash-up report, including metrics around project success against the success criteria. Additionally, there is a practical deliverable in the Lessons Learnt report and the actions arising. This report sets out the concrete lessons learnt – what should be repeated and embedded into future projects or working practices and what should be avoided. Some of these will spawn actions to be allocated and executed.

Together with the PPR, the Lessons Learnt report represents a continuous improvement approach. This may not appear to be relevant if the eDM/ECM project is a standalone instance. However, such projects are frequently implemented in stages and there may be other IT projects with parallels so the lessons learnt maybe valuable.

Launch Period

Do run a launch. Projects normally begin with kick-start meetings of some description. Operational use can be exactly the same. The purpose of this event is to encourage adoption and foster enthusiasm for the solution. This requires an understanding of the audience: the business appetite for the change at all levels, any disruptions to existing behaviours and an understanding of any previous experiences in the organisation (for example a project which didn't go well). In the case of prior experiences, any lessons learnt should have been taken into account and these can be raised as positives.

Above all, the rationale for implementing the eDM/ECM system should be clear to all. Understanding the benefits of any change is the number one factor in user adoption of IT projects according to Forrester Research. Understanding the business logic inevitably leads to the solution being embraced more readily and this can be facilitated by a proper introduction.

However, everyone in the audience will be thinking something that could run contrary to the corporate benefits: What's in it for me? The involvement of the stakeholders to date will be important here and will have prepared a way to minimise disruption and to understand the operational benefits. Capturing these and playing these back to the audience can aid enthusiasm and adoption. Never underestimate the power of advocacy, especially from those in-house.

A word on the scope of the operational launch: a "big bang" approach is not generally successful and raises unrealistic expectations. Nonetheless, some degree of ceremony does give the project the blessing of the business as a whole. Generally speaking, creating high expectations can lead to disappointment downstream, especially as there may be snagging issues. A pragmatic dose of realism at launch time is recommended.

Your launch should cover off the rationale for an eDM/ECM system, the deliverables, the solution, "what's in it for me" for end users, escalation/help points, any collateral and any next steps.

Do maintain awareness. We've all seen it – a big fanfare and then nothing. Better to tone down the initial launch but keep up the chatter. Reinforcing the benefits and celebrating successes over a period of time encourages take-up. It also generates a drive for other groups to want the new technology. Creating a communications plan will assist here - Intranets, wikis, blogs, e-shots, newsletters, company or departmental meetings or even poster campaigns can be used to ensure awareness and ensure overall communications with end users. Balance any tendency towards relentlessly upbeat content (this won't assuage any naysayers) – communications can cover off key learnings, hints and tips and experiences to give a balanced view. Nonetheless, project success stories, however small, will attract others from the woodwork, attracting users and assisting the transition from old processes and working methods. For this reason alone, this often neglected "hearts and minds" aspect of the project is important and it is recommended that effort is focused here until it's clear that you are achieving acceptable adoption rates and levels of satisfaction.

Do maintain a snagging list. The UAT process should mitigate this, but any IT rollout will have a few issues. These may be simple operational or training issues. They may be a little more fundamental - the most common eDM/ECM issue is that the taxonomy has been too ambitious and may need to be simplified. Irrespective of what the issues are, keep a central list and identify the severity of any issue and the frequency with which it arises. Keep up momentum by tackling these as quickly as possible and ensuring that cynicism doesn't take hold. Doing so will build trust and reinforce the will to make this a successful part of the business. For this reason, it helps to go back to those raising any issues to see if the resolution is satisfactory.

It is therefore important to ensure that the project manager and stakeholders are kept engaged in the project during this phase. Measuring adoption and satisfaction levels will help you assess when to reduce this involvement and move to the next operational phase.

Do keep close to your stakeholders. The stakeholders have been a critical part of the project so far – giving requirements insight, assistance in the selection process, configuration input and UAT help. They should be the chief champions of the eDM/ECM. As the eyes and ears on the ground they can validate what's going well and what needs improvement. They will have direct input into the snagging list and be your barometer of success.

Their input to date also creates accountability and ownership. This stake in the success of the project is invaluable, reinforcing advocacy and encouraging personal adoption. Where there are laggards, slow to change then your stakeholders can be used to help, either formally with cascaded training or through personal evangelism of the solution and its benefits.

If your project is a staged roll out you may even find that great advocates lead to a positive envy in other departments wanting this new solution.

Don't lose communications with your vendor. Once the solution has gone live that shouldn't be the end of the vendor involvement. They may be the route to tackling any snagging issues or assist in adoption with training. You may even wish to include the vendor in your launch programme. The vendor will provide upgrades and an awareness of product capabilities, even product futures which may affect your planning.

In addition to personal contact, there are also likely to be newsletters, forums, Twitter feeds etc. which may keep you up to date.

Do establish ongoing review meetings. During this phase keep the review meetings going from your implementation stage. The stakeholders will be able to input and review the snagging issues. There will also be the chance to agree ownership on any issues and any communications needed. After the launch period, establish a formal bedding-in period start date when you can reduce the frequency of these sessions.

Bedding-in Period

Do plan for the next roll out/project stage. Once you know that your initial implementation is operational and well adopted you'll need to confirm next steps. These may be additional functionality – say more in-depth integration – or simply rolling out to other departments. Building on initial success is easier than working up separate new business cases and converting peers elsewhere in the organisation which have forgotten the initial enthusiasm and continued with old working methods. Ensure that the first phase is successful and, if so, establish if you can achieve similar benefits elsewhere.

Do look to improve with further automation opportunities. Many eDM/ECM implementations are staged, most notably on a departmental basis to prove out the technology prior to wider adoption. In this case there may be more to consider than simply adding extra licences.

eDM and ECM systems can power-assist existing business processes, moving from the stop-start of manual activity to the streamlined and automatic. This is especially the case where there is paper documentation. Workflow, automated capture and integration with existing line of business applications can create transformational process changes. Order processing, purchase order processing and proofs of delivery are classic examples. In these cases mature eDM/ECM products work by capturing forms and documents when they arrive into the organisation. By recognising key identifying data such as references, PO number or the name of the supplier or purchaser, workflow functions can ensure that the relevant process is initiated.

Moving from the more passive storage and retrieval of a simple initial implementation to pro-active automation is a common evolutionary step and often signals optimisation of the business investment in eDM/ECM systems.

Don't be afraid to review & fine tune your taxonomies. Taxonomies can be too complex and create operational delays. If so then this will reduce performance and act as a barrier to acceptance by end users. Review your usage patterns and establish if there could be any streamlining. It could be worthwhile streamlining the configuration, limiting the depth of any folder structure and the number of metadata tags used. This will be much less of an issue if you've managed to automate the majority of your document capture.

Do review training gaps and run refresher courses. You may find that usage is sub-optimal and you're not getting the most from your investment. The communications plan should cover off FAQs, hints and tips, maybe even quick tutorial sessions, but you may need something a little more clear cut.

Your stakeholders will have been involved throughout the whole process to date. You will therefore have a ready-made informal training team to conduct short cascaded training sessions. Your vendor will also still be available to run more formal courses.

Poor adoption will undermine the chances of success. Personal encouragement and interaction may need augmentation with supplementary training.

Full Adoption

Do implement product updates on time. Obvious really – where there is an update it's normally issued for good reason, be it new functionality or error fixes. Updates will be issued to ensure currency with the latest operating system, versions of MS Office, browsers etc. The more cautious may wish to hang fire for a few days and see if there are any issues arising from the rest of the user community. This aside, it is good practice to keep up to date and it aids product support should you require it.

Do purchase software maintenance. To benefit from product changes you will inevitably need to adopt the vendor's software maintenance package. This will ensure that you're updated and typically also offer access to the support channel. Software maintenance is an insurance to ensure that you could recover, should you lose access to your documents

Do keep up to date with product extensions, modules and opportunities. Very few vendors will rest on their laurels and undertake no new engineering. Products will evolve in line with new technologies – another reason to ensure that updates are deployed in timely fashion. In addition new products and modules may be added to the vendor's portfolio. Technology, compliance demands and other external drivers will ensure that staying still is not an option without subsequent competitive disadvantage, increased costs or non compliance. As your organisation, your working methods and the technologies you use evolve then so will the opportunities for your peers and competitors to optimise their performance.

Do continue to talk to your peers. Others businesses may be using similar solutions and may be able to offer practical hints or future opportunities. Where there are professional bodies or networking opportunities you could well pick up or dispense beneficial guidance. This is one area where you can gain practical and current insight into working practice and technology changes.

Do consider active contribution to the solution. If the eDM/ECM solution is embedded in your organisation and making its presence felt then you may wish to see some refinements.

It's important to all vendors that they receive feedback from the real world – good and bad. Contribution to user groups and product forums can ensure that your input can be heard and taken on board in future product releases.

This also gives you a channel by which to ensure that the technology and real world needs continue to be met by your chosen solution vendor.

Conclusion

This paper has covered a range of practical recommendations from establishing the need for an eDM/ECM system through selection to implementation and full operational use. Some subjects such as migration between systems and what to do if you decide to stop using an eDM/ECM system haven't been covered. They're technical issues for another day and will depend on your circumstances.