

ERP Failure #11: The Nine Pillars of Software Project Success

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It is very powerful to teach a trier of fact what the steps are to manage, build, and deliver a “successful” system. I’ve created the nine pillars of success, reminiscent of the old Greek structures, to do just that. Failure to properly perform even a couple of these will likely lead to the structure’s or project’s early collapse and lawsuit.

1) Implement Proper Project Management

The Integrator and Customer need to embrace industry best practices to manage and balance risks, resources, schedules, quality, scope, stakeholder expectations to steer project to success. Good project managers (both Customer and Integrator) must properly plan, organize and direct resources to deliver a quality, “suitable” production-ready product.

2) Create Attainable Estimates, Targets, Commitments, & Plans

Systems Integrators employ industry estimating standards, its own history on similar projects and best-in-class tools to estimate project cost, resources and schedule. A work breakdown structure should be used to calculate the critical path and monitor progress through data collection and analysis.

3) Assign Properly Qualified & Experienced Personnel

Customer and Integrator must each assign individuals with the requisite qualifications and availability to fulfill the responsibilities required on the project. Controlling turnover is critical.

4) Gather, Understand, and Manage Requirements

The Integrator, with the Customer’s input, must document and prioritize customer’s requirements ensuring common understanding of requirements scope. Use hands-on prototypes and demos. The RTM helps ensure the requirements are being served at each project phase.

5) Follow good Software Development Methodology

The Integrator must select the SDLC which best matches the type of project. The Customer must buy-in. The Best SDLC, when used by experienced teams, promotes matching requirements to delivered functionality, reduces defects, reduces total cost of ownership, improves quality and mitigates risks – ultimately providing shorter delivery times, better value, and systems with more performance abilities.

6) Perform Proper & Complete Testing

Testing is critical for delivering high-quality production-ready software. Any testing short-cuts must be carefully assessed by both parties with risks calculated and communicated first. Testing is performed in stages and should proceed only when predecessor Stage Gates meet agreed-to exit criteria. Regression test, regression test, regression test!

7) Execute Stellar Training and Learning

Training is essential for a successful software implementation. It helps avoid transition setbacks, errors, and overtime. Process leads, Super users, End-users all need different content and training materials to properly and best perform their roles. Practice sandboxes and job aids should be used and made available post-training. Both parties must assure appropriate schedule time for trainees.

8) Communicate Fairly and Honestly

The Integrator needs to align its interests with Customer interests to minimize deviation in goals. Communications must report intelligent, actionable information and metrics that measure “real” progress and estimate to complete. I’m tired of seeing three-year, \$36 mm projects reported as “on schedule” for the first 30 months, and then in month 31 announce that the project has “two years left and will be more than 75% over budget.”

9) Deliver a “Suitable” Production-Ready “SYSTEM” and Go-Live Support

The system to be delivered may include hardware, software, and documentation, but also organizational change management, business process re-engineering, and new position training. Delivering that SYSTEM is a much bigger challenge than just delivering tested, working software – and may include rollout pilot testing with the real people in their new roles using the System. It should be materially free from errors/defects and straight forward to use, maintain & upgrade. It should help the customer achieve its business case.

Each party must take responsibility for making the pillars as strong as possible. Please see the model linked here: <http://wsrcg.com/PDFs/the-nine-pillars.pdf> for more.

We are here to help. More information about WSR Consulting Group, LLC, is available at

<http://wsrcg.com>

Questions or comments?

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