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Walking the Tightrope of SAP Implementation: Points to Remember

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Why do some SAP projects fail, while many other SAP projects succeed?

Kellton Tech's extensive SAP implementation experience has allowed us to identify three primary factors that are critical to a project's success:

1. Alignment
2. Training/ Knowledge enablement
3. Accountability

Alignment

When the management is not aligned with the key users and business process owners, the wheels tend to fall off the wagon very quickly. Selecting a critical enterprise solution like SAP requires all hands on deck. Management needs to understand, and convey its top priorities to the rest of the company. End users and business process owners need to understand the company objectives, for both the project and the company. This will help the users to understand and facilitate their buy-in on any changes in business processes and decisions that may affect their work at a micro-level. It will also open the lines of communication so that these end-users feel comfortable providing feedback at the first sign that things are not aligned properly.

When priorities do not match, or are not even known, then critical business decisions made in the deployment of the SAP software can often be wrong or sub-optimal. Much like building a formula one race car, you need the feedback of the team owner on how much he is willing to invest in the car, and understand the team's priorities on features and technologies. You also need feedback from the crew chiefs and mechanics to learn what they need to make their jobs easier and faster. Finally, you need feedback from the race car driver, who will provide intimate feedback on which features and functions will be most important to him. If everyone is aligned with the same priorities, then you can build a racecar that will meet the needs of the entire team. On the other hand, if you miss feedback from a single key stakeholder in this scenario, the race car will fail to meet the needs of the team, the project will not be successful, and the race car will hinder the team's ability to win races.

> ## NOT ONLY ARE WE NOT ON THE SAME PAGE, I DONT EVEN THINK WE'RE READING THE SAME BOOK.

Similarly with troubled SAP projects, we often see lack of key participation from one or more stakeholders. This lack of feedback/direction causes key project activities to stall, or be directed in the wrong direction. Company alignment and regular participation from key stakeholders is critical to ensure the project is executed according to everyone's needs.

Make sure your team has a project methodology that makes company alignment not only a critical component, but also a

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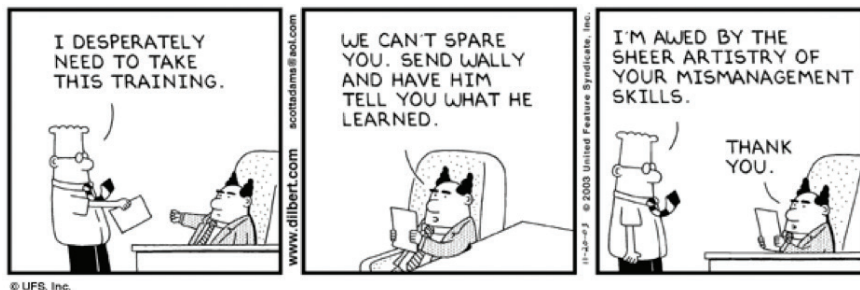
highly effective part of the project. It is important to identify critical stakeholders at all levels of the organization, provide communication channels and activities that tie in the entire team, and pro-actively engage stakeholders to head off potential project issues that may delay or derail the project.

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INVESTMENT IN TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ARE CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SAP PROJECTS

Training/ Knowledge Enablement

One area that is often underfunded, and over-looked, is the training required for those who are most impacted by the project—the users. Quite often users may have been trained adequately in using an existing legacy system. They know it like the back of their hands. Despite the limitations of the older systems, the users have developed clever work-arounds and techniques to do the work that is required. When adopting a new system, many times the users are not provided adequate time, nor training, on how to take advantage of

the features of the new system compelling them to revert to their old habits that worked with prior systems. Quite often, this is a symptom of lack of participation and alignment with management on the project's goals. Lack of training further exacerbates this problem.

SAP is a force multiplier for businesses to run better, but in order to take advantage of key system features and derive the full business benefits of this powerful new system, users must acquire a new level of knowledge. Investment in training and knowledge transfer are critical components of successful SAP projects. That initial investment will greatly reduce the risk of user frustration and will allow them and the business to reap the benefits of SAP adoption.

To facilitate this critical knowledge transfer, companies should consider having their project teams use leading training tools such as SAP's Work Performance Builder, to easily develop, deploy, and assist all users of the system with critical documentation and step-by-step videos, guides, and simulations on how to use the system and run their day-to-day activities easily. This powerful training tool allows on-demand access to answer critical user questions, resulting in minimal disruption in the business productivity while accelerating user adoption.

Accountability

Employees are very busy doing their day-to-day work activities, especially within a nimble business where employees play multiple roles. During an ERP project, the customer team members often do not have the time to devote the necessary time or priority to the project, while simultaneously completing their regular job responsibilities. For example, during the testing phase of the project, users may not have the time to devote to the proper testing and validation of the business transactions of the system. This can lead to delays in the project going

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live, or an improperly tested system being adopted, resulting in major issues later.

To avoid this impediment, it is important to map when users are busy, and identify when a key stakeholder's input is not only necessary, but vital to the success of the project. Better planning may help the business to make the best use of the available time of the project team. In addition, work with the steering committee and management to properly incentivize and reward project team members to participate in key milestone activities. With the proper support, employees can properly prioritize competing work demands to the success of the project, ultimately benefitting the company as a whole.

Alignment, Training, and Accountability when thoroughly understood and adequately prioritized within the organization, the execution of the SAP project becomes a harmonious dance of the participants. The conclusion is a celebration of teamwork and the ultimate success of the new, eventful company. **CA**