

Clear communication is key to success of any rollout

If your organization is faced with major changes to key systems, such as e-mail, then there stands a great chance that those changes will involve some level of user frustration.

So, what steps should an IT department take in order to reduce confusion among users and ensure a smooth rollout?

Oftentimes the IT department is so concerned with the “nuts and bolts” of completing a rollout, that simple, effective communication is forgotten or not carefully thought through. Having a good communication plan is a very important aspect of any successful project.

If your IT organization is fortunate enough to have a Project Management Office (PMO), then you have the advantage of having people whose full-time job is to effectively communicate plans regarding IT implementations. But if you are like most companies, a project manager is a luxury most just wish for.

There are a few important steps that any IT department should take to ensure a smooth rollout of a new system, and to guarantee that everyone has the correct information once the cutover date is reached:

- Communicating the goal of the system and how the planned system benefits the entire organization
- Identifying your key decision makers and expert users
- Creating a simple communication plan and providing that plan to the management group

The first two of the above items are fairly self-explanatory, but what about the third item? Creating an effective communication plan need not be complex, however it needs to include a few

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key pieces of information, and some standard workflows need to be applied to ensure the plan works effectively.

Below are some steps that an IT department can take to create an effective communication plan for a rollout:

- Ensure that you list the key figures in the project, what each person’s role is, and his or her basic contact information (such as e-mail address, phone number,

etc.)

- In the plan, break down what type of communication will happen during each phase of implementation.

For example:

Phase I: Installation of software — e-mail will be sent to all affected employ-

e-mail one week in advance of training sessions, and also upon confirmation of attendance.

Phase III: Cutover to new system — e-mail will be sent to all affected employees one week and two days prior to cutover reminding them that the old system will cease to function

Now, ensure that proper approvals are obtained, distribute the communication plan to the team and don’t forget to set your task management system or calendar to remind you to follow-through with your communications tasks.

To help ensure that during the busiest times of the implementation that these critical communications are sent out, simply draft the messages in advance and save them to the drafts folder in your e-mail system. This way, you have ample time prior to the implementation to think through what you need to communicate, and then simply make small edits if necessary prior to hitting “send.”

If you are very fortunate, you may have access to a system that will allow you to compose your e-mails and schedule them to automatically distribute at designated times.

Through the creation, implementation and monitoring of an effective communications plan, your IT project is well poised to be successful, while ensuring that there is no lack of communication about what users should expect from the system.

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ees describing the schedule of installation and any interruptions or changes to daily work that will be involved.

Phase II: Pre-Implementation Training — users will be reminded to attend mandatory training on new systems via

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