Are You Ready for Implementation

Every project begins with great excitement. The organization has finally committed the resources to accomplish a large scale project. The kick off meeting begins and people begin to travel for training. The project begins to take off. Life is sailing along, and you get to 90 days prior to your go live. How do you know if you are really ready for implementation?

Everyone Has a Different Definition of Ready

If you ask your Senior Leadership Team what their definition of ready is, you get a very high level answer. Your software vendor will give you the technical task to implement your software. Middle Management will define ready with operational goals.

It shouldn't be surprising if you are confused when you are asked if "we" are ready. Are all of these answers wrong, perhaps not? It is usually a culmination of all of these answers. Let me try and help you put some frame work around the answer to the question. The first rule of project management is always, "break it down into logical, manageable segments". For any project, I have found these 5 basic segments work the best.

Detail that Matters

Readiness Measurement	Description
Application Readiness	Applications are on target with dictionary/master file build. Testing has taken place. Issues list has been created and prioritize.
Operational Processes	Operational processes are streamlined and standardized across the organization. Integration has taken place. Major points of failure in processes are understood and the organization is ready to address. Organization has a change management structure to manage/update processes.
Management and Staff Engagement	Management and staff are currently engaged and have adopted the new system functionality. Staff is ready and willing to adapt to a new platform.
Overall Management of Modules	The various modules are managed/supported by the department with guidance by the IT department to ensure integration. Super Users are in place and up-to-date on current processes. Education infrastructure exists to carry the organization through the migration.
IT Readiness	Has a strong understanding of the migration issues including data conversion and staffing. Has an inventory of 3_{rd} party interfaces and has knowledge of vendor's readiness for migration. Help Desk processes have been established and staff trained. All hardware devices are in place and all user accounts/passwords have been created and disseminated.

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Once you have settled on the segments, you will want to measure each of the departments or modules against them. You should have a cohesive project plan with defined milestones to work from. I like to use the software vendor's project plans and incorporate the organization's goals and milestone's into it. The software vendor has been through many of these plans and has experience that you can draw upon. However, the organization's goal and objectives have to be carried forward as well.

Analyzing the Details

Each one of these segments should be consistently reviewed throughout the project. If you wait until 90 or 60 days prior to go live, you have missed your opportunity to steer the project effectively. If your organization has the resources, you should seriously consider a Project Readiness Assessment in the beginning of the project by a third party. This is similar to an Implementation Readiness Assessment, but focuses on if the organization is ready to begin the project. Many of the projects that fail to implement, fail at the beginning of the project. The Project Readiness Assessment can identify if your organization is starting the project on the "right foot" and using a third party helps neutralize any findings in the report.

Scoring Matrix

You should also consider putting a scoring matrix to each one of these segments for each department or module. Unfortunately, projects are never black and white. One module may be ahead in one area but behind in three others. The scoring matrix helps identify quickly and easily identify those that are not ready. At this point, this is where you will want to apply the milestones across the scoring matrix. Most vendors have a project plan that you should be incorporating the organizations plans into. I strongly recommend that you use a combination of the vendor's milestone and the organization's milestones together to create a unified plan. For my scoring matrix, I normally like to use scale of 1-5.

1 - No milestones have been completed
2 - Some milestones are completed
3 - Half of the milestones have been completed
4 - Most of the milestones are completed
5 - All milestones are completed

For Example:

Department	Application Readiness	Operational Processes	Management & Staff Engagement	Overall Mgmt. of Module	IT Readiness	Total
Patient Registration and Scheduling	2	1	2	1	2	1.6
Health Information Management	2	1	1	1	2	1.4
Diagnostic Imaging	2	2	3	2	1	2.0
Laboratory	2	2	3	2	1	2.0

I would also strongly encourage you to include a detail commentary section for each department/module supporting your scoring. This will help anyone reading your report to understand why you scored the way you did. The great thing about this report is that you can start preparing Senior Management with go live anytime during the project. The report doesn't have to be publish just before the end. In fact, I strongly encourage you to start mid-way though the project. Project managers know long before the end if a department is going to be ready. If the report is being written during a specific time frame (i.e. half way through the project), a score of 3 is exactly where each department should be. However, if you are half way through the project and the score is 1, immediate attention needs to be given to that department to determine how they are going to complete the job in half the time remaining. If you write the report at the half-way point, and/or at the 75% point in the project, by the time you are at 100%, you can avoided unnecessary delays because the issues have been addressed ahead of time.

This is where strong defined milestones need to established. The stronger the milestones, the more definitive the accomplishments can be. The stronger the milestones, the less subjective the report will be. The stronger the milestones, the less push back there will be about the scoring. Hopefully, I have made my case about strong milestones.

For example:

Diagnostic Imaging:

Overall Score	Score	Assessment
Application Readiness	2	There will be significant changes to the current workflow with the new system. Dictionaries are up to date and have been recently updated. However testing is behind.
Operational Processes	2	The department has policies and procedures that were last reviewed recently. The department has document downtime procedures, but they are not tested on an on-going basis.
Management & Staff Engagement	3	The department and staff are well engaged in managing the existing system and will need to provide time and effort when migrating towards implementing ITS and the PACs interfaces. Training is behind by 40% of staff not trained.
Overall Department Management of Existing Applications	2	The department provides management oversight for their applications and processes. They have a dedicated IT resource to support their needs. There is no formal training program in place. DI is currently struggling with the PACS implementation, but is working through the issues that have been presented during this project.
IT Readiness	1	There are many reports including departmental worksheets that will need conversion. Additionally, there are significant 3rd party interfaces to be migrated. IT has a current open position for supporting this department that must be filled prior to the migration.
Total Score	2.0	

Specifically for IT

I want to specifically talk to the IT professionals for a moment. If you don't work in IT, you can skip this section or feel free to listen in. In any large project, you are going to have an issue with resource allocation. You are going to have most of your IT resources dedicated to the other departments in order to help them get ready. However, you also must get the IT department ready. You will feel that struggle or tug on resources, and it is easy to ignore your own department. Do not fall into this temptation! In order for you to help, assist, and lead the organization successfully in the implementation, the IT department must be ready.

If the IT Department is not ready, you have the greater likelihood of jeopardizing the project.

Summary

I will not kid you. This is not an easy report to produce the first time. It takes a considerable amount of time and energy to produce. You need a cohesive project plan in place with strong milestones defined. However, if it is done correctly, it will be a great objective tool to communicate the readiness of the organization to successfully implement the system.   It will give your Senior Leadership Team the confidence that the organization is poised and ready to meet challenge of "Go Live".

D288 IT Solutions, LLC was founded by Kevin L. Frederick in 2010, a former Vice President and CIO of a health system, who was always in search of a company that could assist him in seeing the "big picture" and help him achieve it in a practical approach. With 26 years of experience in Healthcare Information Technology, Kevin brings together a broad range of interoperability and practical experience interfacing systems.

The goal of D288 IT Solutions, LLC is to support the IT advances of hospitals and healthcare through integration. To come along side and assist with their strategic vision and objectives.

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