



6 Tips to Simplify
Your Next
Software Roll Out

Choosing the right software is easy. It's the implementation and adoption that's hard. Especially when your users are already married to legacy systems.

However, with a few considerations and some foresight, you can make your end users happy while giving your organization the software update it needs.

Start by remembering two things: First, while it's one thing to introduce software across the business, ensuring adoption among targeted groups within the workforce is a different beast. Successful adoption hinges on the implementation process; so it's critical to understand how each decision will affect the next.

Second, you don't get success without your end users. Without considering the user experience, even the best products and solutions will fail. In fact, the "Great IT Choke" refers to the average productivity loss of 17 percent caused by stalled usage¹. At that rate, any money you put into the software is a loss if your end users don't get on board.

With these facts in mind, here are six best practices to ensure success for you, your end users and the business.

1. Identify the goal of the new product.

Before you can embark on the journey of implementation and adoption, you need a clear idea of goals—why you need new software and what you hope it will achieve. What problem or pain point should the new solution address? The answer to this question

is key in selecting the right software for end-user adoption. Here's why: Leadership and the employees will want to understand the decision-making behind the selected solution and how it will improve the way work gets done.

Determine whether the goal is to:

- Simplify current processes
- Supplement existing technology
- Make the organization more secure and compliant
- Realize cost savings

Also, if you've been down this road before, take a second to consider what could've made the last purchase more successful. **Some questions here include:**

- Did end users experience the expected ease with the new software?
- Did the go-live process present technical issues, and could you have diagnosed those problems ahead of time?
- Did the software actually have a practical use?

How you answer these questions will determine the right technology choice for your business. From here, you can start developing policies based on the hierarchy of priorities.

2. Make sure end users understand the "why".

Nothing makes employees more uncertain than experiencing change and feeling like they didn't receive adequate communication. If you think issues in this area don't have a cost, consider this data the Holmes Report cited:

- In a year, you could lose more than \$62 million due to poor communication.
- For productivity alone, the annual cost per worker as a result of communication errors could exceed \$26,000.

3. Meet with end users to grow organic support

Your end users are a big deal. Not only do you want them to look forward to the new product implementation, but you also want them to be cheerleaders throughout the process. Beta test with small groups to establish a feedback loop. This strategy helps ensure the final product meets their needs. It also gives them an opportunity to have a stake in achieving organizational goals. They can help you answer questions like "What happens if I press this button?" and uncover some scenarios you may not have considered.

If the crowd goes mild during adoption, the consequences could be worse than a few employees not raving about the new software in the break room. Financial losses could climb to the hundreds of thousands. And while some employees may just decide to keep using the legacy system, others may turn in their resignation if the software misses the mark.

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4. Acquire leadership buy-in

Start the push for executive buy-in from the start. This step works in the same way as getting end users involved: You tailor your goals and software choices before you make a final decision. Additionally, you'll get an idea of how your objectives align with those of the business and where it's headed.

Keep in mind your approach to the execs shouldn't be the same as your talks with your end users. You need to sell your idea in the business context. So use phrases like "cost-effective measure" and "saved productivity" to pinpoint issues that resonate with senior leadership while addressing end users' concerns.

Here are a few other strategies that can help:

- **Know your audience:** Before you pitch your ideas for a software upgrade, do some research on the execs who will help you get the project from start to finish. Nuance is the name of the game, and you want to have something for everyone in your pitch.
- **Let the numbers talk:** Charts and graphs appear in business-centered stock photos because data is king in the real world. To illustrate and support the qualitative elements, present quantitative cost and benefits data in a way that's both visually engaging and consumable.

5. Develop a process

Alright, you're ready to roll out your new software, right? Not just yet. Before the implementation starts, you need to map out a plan and ensure everyone is aware. Transparency is an objective from start to finish, so think about these points:

Know the current workflows.

- Don't pull everything apart at once during implementation. Consider all the unique use cases and workflows that will be affected by the rollout and find out how they work to minimize disruption.
- Keep records. For example, one group of end users might be married to legal pads. You can use this information to find gaps between their preferred methods that further justify new technology. With documentation, you can keep the execs up to speed.

Understand who's doing what.

Agonize over details. If the software produces an issue during beta, who should testers contact? How? What about during the go-live stage? How often will you communicate updates? What are the milestones along the implementation process? Use these questions and others to map out the journey. The priorities you established earlier in this step will help you keep everyone informed.

6. Don't skimp on the training

Remember: Training is continuous. Education shouldn't stop once the new technology is installed, and your end users aren't pros just because they've learned a few keyboard shortcuts.

With this in mind, be sure to provide multiple and ongoing training opportunities. You'll also want to offer a variety of trainings that accommodate different learning styles. Whether your training is delivered online or in-person, **incorporate a combination of the following supplemental training tools in your implementation plan to ensure a positive user experience and successful adoption:**

- Webinars
- Online tutorials or videos
- Gamified apps
- Monthly lunch and learns
- Weekly demos
- User guides
- Interactive user assessments and quizzes

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Conclusion

Deploying new technologies is complicated and requires thorough, thoughtful planning and execution. Just remember, the success of a new product or service depends on your ability to anticipate and address the needs and behaviors of your end users. So use these tips to increase your chances of a successful rollout.

Once you have the data to prove the new product's positive impact, you can rest assured the solution was a worthwhile investment.

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