

Design In Success

by Chuck Griffin

Design success into your information management system

Before an organization installs a new information system to manage its facilities more efficiently, its managers must understand how to control the transition process and how that could affect the success of the implementation.

Organizations need to seek success proactively instead of merely trying to avoid failure. You should consider that systems do not solve problems - solutions do. With today's information demands, integration and new opportunities must be a primary focus of any organizational transition process. Implementation processes can turn into a nightmare if not executed strategically.

To help design success into the implementation process, you should:

- * implement a communications strategy;
- * maximize team involvement;
- * be futuristic in your approach;
- * establish an organizational pace;
- * provide a solution;
- * raise expectations;
- * be enterprising in your thinking.

The implementation of any project is where the rubber meets the road. Managing the implementation becomes the lifeline between your organization and the successful deployment of facility management information products and processes.

Each decision throughout the implementation strategy will impact on your plant, people and process. In some cases, existing systems and processes worked well when they were first installed and implemented. Others may never have worked well. Consider the impact of things such as the Y2K computer bug problem, the inefficiencies of information fragmentation, budget reductions and overall organizational shrinkage. These factors often drive organizations to modify current systems, and/or deploy new systems and processes.

Experience has shown us that people within certain systems and processes work well, but others are cumbersome. What happens is that organizations have some information everywhere, but are not gaining knowledge from the information being gathered. This is an important starting point for any implementation. You must identify what you must do to integrate information to help planners make knowledge-based decisions.

If you are striving for maximum integration opportunities, then the enterprise approach is the model to follow. Enterprise software packages promise the seamless integration of all information flowing through an organization.

When taking the enterprise approach to developing the integration of facility management information, the following points will assist in establishing the model for information requirements:

- * Facilities management is the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of the organization;
- * It integrates the principle business administration, architecture and the behavioural and engineering sciences (IFMA);
- * The life cycle performance of any given asset is directly dependent upon the operations and maintenance practices. Maintenance levels affect the performance and economic life of the asset by altering the rate and nature of the deterioration process.

Once the informational requirements have been identified, there will still be issues such as finding out what information is available, conversion of databases, the compatibility of databases, intra-system communications and organizational requirements. Don't rule out tribal knowledge as a key information source, along with drawings, reports, operating and maintenance manuals.

By following the key elements of designing in success, organizations can establish and maintain organizational readiness. The stronger this readiness is, the less chance for the "letdown factor." Far too often, there is a gap between people's heightened expectations of the end product and the actual functionality of the end product itself. Through an effective communication strategy, organizations can be prepared to be more responsive to:

- * the importance of transition management;
- * the opportunities created by change;
- * the information integration potential.

Expectations of facilities management organizations are greater today than in the past. We must seek to achieve and even exceed these expectations, through enhanced information management and organizational design.