

## Implement the New Design – Sharing Expert Insights into Implementation... before you begin

*The following is an adaptation with excerpts from The Change Management Toolkit for Implementation of Mission-Critical Change, Third Edition, by Gary Skarke, Dutch Holland and Linda Wilson (WinHope Press, 2005), pages 126-127*

*Authors' Note: We always hear from our clients (and we agree!) that implementation is the hardest part. Therefore, we have an article sharing our insights into what we have seen works with implementations. Our implementations with client frequently are major mission-critical changes to their strategy, processes, systems, or culture. We may come on a client team as part of the planning, the design, or the implementation. We set the stage for this article assuming our reader is just starting implementation of a major initiative.*

**Everything changes now!** As you move from analysis and design/ redesign into implementation, many components of your initiative and work will be changing. And they will be changing in dramatic fashion. You will be shifting gears and changing the:

- **Stakes** – The ante is substantially raised as you shift into implementation. What has been thus far a paper exercise (with a few pilots) now becomes the real deal with serious dollars involved and serious consequences. With any major change to your business (big strategy shift, process redesign, or ERP implementation), the company's leaders and owners are essentially "betting the farm" your project(s) will produce results – on time, on target and on budget. And they will expect good results to be sustainable post-implementation...and even improvable and/or exportable to other parts of the organization.
- **Impact Area** – During earlier stages of the project, the team(s) interacted with individuals and relatively small groups of people, and very likely at senior management levels. During implementation, project team(s) will be engaged with – and engaging – larger groups of employees, supervisors and managers over a comparatively longer time period. Suppliers and/or customers are almost certain to be impacted by changes in your strategy, business processes, or systems. They will require special attention throughout implementation, as well.
- **People and Teams** – Implementation means the composition of teams and team members will need to change.
  - **Project Leadership.** Line management – the key people for sustaining support and energy during implementation and for continuing to produce results post-implementation – will become much more involved as leaders. This does not mean that the design project leader(s) go away, but their role shifts to providing operational support. The role of visible champions / spokespersons for the initiative – the chief implementation managers, if you will – must belong to the credible, committed, accountable managers for operationalizing the changes.
  - **Project Membership.** The premise above applies here, as well. Some design team members will remain to provide invaluable context and technical process expertise. But the implementation teams will now include a cross-section of representatives from departments / work groups impacted with operationalizing the changes.

- **Steering Committee Membership.** Sponsorship / championship of the initiative will include the top executive in the changes being operationalized, as well as processes upstream and downstream. And these top executives will need to be visibly committed and actively involved on behalf of the goals and results of the project(s).
- **Dialogue** – As you shift into implementation, the audience for information becomes much larger and your messages about the project will change. Project leaders and project team members will be “chief communicators,” wearing their marketing / sales hats much of the time. And executive sponsors will be “on tour” and “on call” discussing the rationale for the change, the breadth and depth of change, the implementation plan and progress / results.
- **Pace** – During the analysis and design/redesign phases, the project teams were smaller and the experiments with improvements not widespread. Much of the work was probably done pretty quickly. By nature of the complexity involved, implementation takes more time. There are lots of moving parts that are being altered, and these changes must be executed with as much precision as possible. And when some of these moving parts are people, you will have to allow for some changes of pace while still maintaining forward momentum.
- **Intensity** – During implementation, there is an exponential difference in intensity from earlier phases. It is big dollars, big targets, big changes, with lots of people, and lots of pressure – all the elements of a first class nightmare. Intensity is a positive force to help maintain the strong pace required for big change. Be mindful of the old cliché, “you can’t sprint a marathon.” It definitely applies here. Intensity is necessary and good, but at reasonable levels and in reasonable doses.
- **Planning Detail and Structure** – Doing work in new ways, in different work groups, using new skills, new equipment and different materials is a complex change for just one work team to manage. Multiply by many work teams in multiple locations and the need for detailed implementation planning is readily apparent. And this project will need to be coordinated with other projects going on in the company – all competing for the same finite supply of resources.

**Final Words** –We approach the work to be done during implementation as an “engineering” change to a mechanical system, delivered with substantial social finesse to minimize disruption to people and work tasks. There are certain steps to take in a certain order, and these steps can be flow-charted and accomplished to meet budget, schedule and quality specs. Implementation is remarkable work, much like making renovations to a manufacturing plant in order to produce a new, state-of-the-art widget for release next year while still producing the regular supply of widgets to meet this quarter’s goals. So get started ... let the Implementation begin!

Gary Skarke and Linda Wilson