Clients First Methodology

Clients First is dedicated to project success. That means laying a good foundation before embarking on the implementation of a technology solution. That is why we developed our practical, results-oriented Impact Assessment so that clients know what to expect moving forward. This upfront assessment gives our clients a clear project definition, as a way to measure the success. It also allows us to make unbiased software recommendations and, if appropriate, to suggest changes in business processes.

Project Management

Project Management - *planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of a specific project and its goal.*

Project management is required on both sides. Our project manager will organize and coordinate your team to address specific implementation requirements. Your project manager must work with the user groups to monitor scope and budget. This is a process, which requires that person to have a solid understanding of:

- Your business goals
- The project scope
- Industry expertise & product familiarity
- Organizational personality

Project Plan

This outline provides the framework for engagement management. It is important for you to understand how the work is structured so that we can work as a team to implement your system.

Based upon feedback and experience we continually update our approach to implementing solutions with the objective of delivering greater value to our clients.

Project Team Training

The training budget in this proposal is to train the trainer unless explicitly noted otherwise. Your trainer can be a single person or a team of people that will work directly with your end users. This group or individual will be your project team. Their responsibilities will include educating your users on the basic use of the software, assessing the user's retention and preparing the users on how to apply the system to their daily duties. Your project team members should meet the following criteria:

- Have a good understanding of your business or the ability to quickly learn it
- Are able to quickly make decisions regarding user requirements
- Dedicated to your company
- Cover all functional areas that we are implementing
- Have good negotiation skills to help balance user requests with system capabilities

We recognize that it may be required to add users to the training to help propel a department forward with their project tasks. However, freely adding users to the key project training team may generate unnecessary confusion and increase the overall project costs.

Requirements Analysis

The Requirements Analysis can either be brief or detailed depending on the engagement. If the environment or business requirements are complex, then more extensive documentation may be required. The budget in this document is intended for the analysis and preparation of a brief summarization of the key areas of the implementation and what to expect.

If a detailed document is required, a separate budget will be presented. A more detailed documentation is referred to as a Detailed Requirements Analysis. This analysis is designed to be useful in the definition of scope and budget for an engagement with more varied or complex requirements.

Business Process Reengineering

Workflows and processes that evolve over time are not always the most efficient for a business in its current state. What should be avoided is implementing the direct inefficient workflow if a more efficient process can be identified. This is called Business Process Reengineering and it differs slightly from "best practices."

The implementation of "best practices" is a commonly used buzzword designed to give you comfort that you will be better off implementing what everyone else does. This is great if you don't know what you need. If you do, then Business Process Reengineering examines what you are doing, identifies key elements for improvement and then implements these new workflows into your business. This allows you to maintain key differentiators from your competitors while introducing new efficiencies into your processes.

The process of reengineering can take considerable time and effort. The scope of an ERP budget is not intended for the complete reengineering of the processes within your business. A simple change to a process or workflow must be carefully assessed with the understanding that any change may have consequences beyond the direct view. The budget in this proposal is to help you assess this impact and help make recommendations so that you can strategically leverage your business system in an optimal manner.

Conference Room Pilot

A Conference Room Pilot (CRP) is the process where the application is evaluated against the system requirements of the business. Transactions are entered in each subsystem in a conference room setting by the project team, with the objective of determining that the system will properly address the businesses needs and requirements.

Each functional group is budgeted for two Conference Room Pilots. The first is scheduled soon after the training is completed and the initial data conversions have been done. In addition, the project team will be provided testing scenarios that they should review and, if required, adapt to your company's specific needs. The CRP will be executed to suit your circumstances so that we can identify the following:

- Functionality gaps
- Data conversion issues
- Assess current procedures vis-à-vis the software
- New procedures that are required to be defined
- Any additional training needs
- Suitability and to define gaps in all external entity documents
- Personnel issues
- Technology issues

An action plan is then developed to include the scheduling of timelines for addressing the items discovered in the first CRP. The project team must make sure that the action plan doesn't replicate the current systems in place, but extend the new system to meet the essential business requirements. The metrics used for this proposal are based upon common implementations and we want to avoid making any unnecessary changes to the software.

After the action plan from the first CRP is complete, the second is scheduled, which should be relatively close to the functionality that will go into production. This will require the following:

- All functional gaps previously discovered have been addressed as agreed upon. New gaps discovered need to be evaluated as to their importance and addressed externally to maintain compliance within the budget.
- Data converted should be acceptable and all reports should present valid results.
- All user roles should be confirmed as acceptable with only minor adjustments to data, software or procedures.
- All external entity documents print as required.

The go-live date will either be scheduled or confirmed after the second CRP. If the go-live cannot be scheduled, then project scope may be amended to accommodate any change tasks that are required.

Go-live activities

Go-live activities should be scheduled for a month prior and then after the go-live date. These activities should include:

- Final data conversion
- Set-up of the production environment
- Confirmation that all required hardware and software is ready for use by all users
- On-site support for the initial cut over
- Assistance with first month end
- Support of your project team after the system is on-line

The demand and desire for on-site support during the go-live phase varies significantly from engagement to engagement. The proposed budget is for a limited amount of time and should be reviewed to make sure it is acceptable to you. Our standard policy is to leverage remote support tools as much as possible to minimize travel expenses and to efficiently deliver services.

Data Conversion

Data extraction from your current system is not included in the estimates presented here. While it is not common practice for us to complete the extraction portion of the conversion, we do have resources that could assist in this area, if necessary. We would need to further investigate your current situation in order to properly estimate the cost for this additional service.

The budgets presented provide for the following data to be migrated early for education and then later for cut over. The initial data conversions will be done using standard data migration templates and will identify settings that you would prefer to be handled differently. Do not be alarmed. We have allowed for this in our budget and in the later stages of the implementation. We will have the users review the migrated data after they have gained a better understanding of the new system.

It is common to revise master table keys when moving to a new system or combining data from multiple systems. The initial conversions are designed to allow you to view the proposed schemes and make sure the best ones are identified early. In addition, missing links and/or collisions are also identified at this stage, allowing us sufficient time to address these issues.

The initial files that will be converted early in the implementation are typically:

- AP Open File
- AR Open File
- GL Chart of Accounts
- Customer Master File
- Vendor Master File

The cutover conversion will include the above tables along with ledger account balances. Additional tables can be migrated but this will affect the implementation budgets.

The quality of the data provided may also affect actual cost. We're expecting that you will provide us with clean data, which in some cases may require a "scrubbing" exercise by the users. We are experienced with migrating data and can identify potentially harmful data before it is entered, but the budget may be impacted if many correction cycles or unexpected data elements are presented.

The budgets allow for the data to be imported from an ASCII comma delimited or fixed length record. For either format, field definitions are required and cross-references from old values to new maybe required. These are standard services for our data conversion budgets.

Development

We can provide development services, either Prototype or Formal. Prototype Development provides services to quickly address requirements with informal communications through your project manager. Formal Development introduces a Function Requirements Document, which details the requirements and budget. It is then the responsibility of the user to accept the document before any technical resources are introduced.

Prototype Development is cost-effective and can be used for projects of all sizes. The prototype process actively engages the users with the technical resource, which helps reinforce the user's ownership of the new system. In addition, the user benefits from gaining a better understanding of the software along with experiencing the power of the new solution.

There are dangers with Prototype Development:

1. Users may reject standard functionality and force the introduction of unnecessary changes. Our implementers are instructed to push back any changes if the user's rejection becomes a project threat and they will inform the Project Manager.
2. Field resources may accept challenges that eclipse their skills to execute and handicap a system. This is a challenge to manage in our industry. Our Project Managers will review the tasks and scope to evaluate the proposed approach and when this is done we will fully guarantee our work.
3. Documentation is normally not a part of this process. We can create the documentation, but the user normally does this so we do not have to make allowances for it.
4. Encourages scope creep. This will happen and in many cases it is a smart decision by the client. It is significantly less costly to make changes on a system before going live than after. The key to good scope creep is with the agreement and understanding that these tasks are not forecasted and they may create a resource demand conflict, which may affect schedules.

Formal Development is significantly more expensive and it may be required to lock down requirements where there is difficulty identifying what needs to be done, or a requirement is very complex. The process starts with a consultant drafting a document of the changes with the objective of getting your agreement before any technical resources will be engaged.

Formal Development does reduce your risk but it will increase the costs of development. In addition, this does not entirely eliminate risk because the process is dependent upon perception of the proposed changes. This could result in a significant effort into formalizing the wrong approach. With "Prototype Development" the perception risk is minimized almost completely because your people can visualize what they are asking for.

Our development budget is for Prototype Development. If a requirement is deemed too risky or requires additional clarification, we will implement the Formal Development approach and provide you with budgets for approval.