

Introduction

Case Study

Why does it happen?

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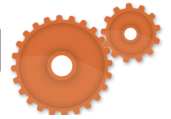
A very small thing
can make a big
difference!

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Hints and Tips

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Ensure Your IT project Doesn't Fail



Who is this guide for?

Anyone who thinks that spending a fortune or loads of time on new technology that the workforce doesn't use is a waste of good time and money (probably most of us!). This guide should help you to avoid that scenario.

Introduction

Did you know that you can actually increase the cost of your ICT development through bad implementation? Most of us are looking for better technology integration, innovation and lower costs. However, technology is a very beguiling thing. Businesses look at a beguiling new technology promising all those things, and think: we could do something with that. They develop a business case and buy the technology; but in the end, the workforce does not take to the new technology, the business case does not get realised, nor does the original idea - which is to save the company some money and make things easier. Lets look at a case study to see why this course of events can occur.

Case Study

An organisation decided to buy a very attractive seeming Voice over Internet Protocol system (VoIP). Free calls on the internal network using a headset instead of a telephone, and for those out and about, they simply have to log onto the internet to make free calls in/ receive calls. However, once the system was installed, staff were still using their mobiles.

In short, this costs businesses more money as two systems were being used simultaneously. The VoIP network, and the mobile phone system, which is an expensive alternative and what the company wanted to get rid of and the reason VoIP was considered in the first place! However there are now two set of costs, - another set has been added with the new system - and none of the benefits.

Why does it happen?

Change can often take a bit of energy – people have to be persuaded that the way they are doing things today is not the way that you want them to be done tomorrow. With our case study example, people had to be persuaded to use the soft phone, or to put on the headsets and log into their laptops. It's a small change, but it takes a bit of energy to break the embedded habit of picking up the mobile. That energy needs to be put into communications. A high level communication from the CEO saying (and even better – doing) that this is the way things are now going to be done, with communications delivered on every front - to everyone mentioning a specific day when the change will happen and when support will be available.

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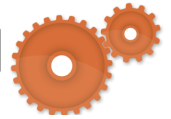
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Once the workforce puts a bit of effort into using the softphones and headsets (no more difficult than using a mobile), and likes it, or can see the benefits, then the change has already happened, and the organisation never slips back.

The case study example above could just as well be a new document management system or a customer relationship management system, which are costly investments. The new systems have obvious benefits: less files with the same information duplicated on individuals systems; automatic back up; files in one place; less processing power/memory needed at the client computer, so therefore less energy used. However, encouraging the workforce to use the new system and stop saving documents to their local hard drives will take energy.

Recognising this will help an organisation come up with an effective communication and support plan, rather than making the mistake of getting the technology, rolling it out and then going quiet on the matter.

The mistake is to assume that failed ICT implementation is just a training problem, just an HR problem, just and IT support problem. It is actually a business problem, so the energy to effect the change must come from the top of the organisation. Find out how your people work with telephony or customer data or documents. Don't look at the systems – look at the people!

If you have invested in the technology and put the energy needed into changing the way that people work, and your workforce is still slipping back to the old way of doing things, then it might be that you may have to admit that the new technology just does not work. If people continually prefer the old way, then go and look at something else.

However, if you have invested in the technology, it works, and should offer your organisation benefits but these are not realised because you have not put in the effort and energy to make the change, then put in the energy!

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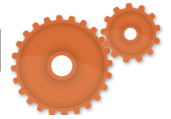
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Hints and tips

- * Check that you are using software and hardware efficiently - have you got a camera sitting in someone's drawer that nobody else knows about?
- * Think about the "total costs of ownership" - free or cheap software might seem a good idea, but if it takes you twice as long to get to use it, or requires extra training, it might be cheaper to buy the software that people are familiar with.
- * Regular maintenance - computers often slow down as they get too much software on, and so some regular "housekeeping" can save time in the long term.

* Ask around - if another arts organisation has recently done what you want to do, they may have some good ideas, or you could even build on what they've done. The [AmbITion online forum](#) is the perfect place for these sorts of questions!

* Other people's shortcuts - people often have "shortcuts" in their own working life, such as using an online scheduler to organise meetings, or storing frequently used documents on their desktop. Share these, and see if any good ideas can be more widely used.

* Set up a document that simply lists your organisations' IT policy: list what software to use for which tasks; how optional kit should be signed out; how new computers should be set-up; what back up processes are; and how you should use certain softwares (email policy, internet and browsing policies, social media policies, etc).

And finally...

Support the developments your staff introduce into your organisation.

Sometimes the consumer drives technology development needed in an organisation (think social technologies, internet telephony). The consumer may be your customer, or may be your staff member bringing practices to work that they use at home. This produces a challenge for those in charge of IT developments in a workforce: if a staff member wants to use internet telephony or social media in their work, should you support them, or ban it?

The examples I am using here are internet telephony and social networking. I have seen many

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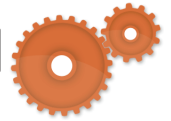
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organisations ban their younger (digital native!) workforce members from using these ICT tools in the workplace: mainly because they are misunderstood as time wasting, distracting activities away from the job in hand.

In fact, they will be used extremely efficiently by those introducing them, and may well be extremely intuitive to use: they are already key tools in that person's digital life that they now want to bring to work. If the tools were explored by the whole organisation to see whether they could bring about innovation or efficiencies, then there might actually be some surprises.

Adopting new ICT developments that some of your workforce already enthusiastically use (at home, under the radar at work) will guarantee success, as these users are already experts and don't need the value of the ICT explaining to them – they can be used as energetic evangelists for bringing other staff members up to speed. It's a benefit to have your younger employees energised as trainers and supporters. Often, these are also technologies that "just work" (think the iPhone, which is so easy to use it has barely any barriers to entry). Implementing these technologies then take far less energy from you.