

Phase II Projects and Continuous Improvement

For months you have lived in the shadow of your pending "Go Live" date and it is finally arrived. You have flipped the switch and begun using your new ERP System. Congratulations! You should be proud of this accomplishment, but do not stop here. There is still plenty to be done. After the investment you have made getting the system up and running, you want to make sure that you derive the maximum benefit from it.

Undoubtedly, there were some items that did not come to fruition in your initial implementation plan and were pushed to the Phase II project list. These items could be optional modules that were not critical for Go Live. They could also be business processes you were not using in your previous system that you'd like to take advantage of in the new system or general process improvements in certain areas of the business. The real ROI of the implementation is often not achieved until these Phase II initiatives are realized.

After you've acclimated to Go Live and prepare to embark on Phase II, please consider the following:

Reassemble your implementation team and create a Phase II plan.

Ideally, your implementation project team had some representation from each functional area of the business. This cross-functional team approach creates a greater sense of ownership when the people who perform the work have input,

and helps to ensure that the key concerns of any given functional area are not overlooked and addressed properly. The same approach should be taken in your post implementation activities.

Review the goals of the initial implementation and ensure they remain the focus of Phase II.

The decision to purchase and implement an ERP system is generally driven by a desire to improve one or more operational areas of your business, ultimately resulting in increased profitability. While the implementation is a critical first step, achieving your desired results requires that business processes are continually reviewed in an effort to eliminate waste (e.g. inventory, rework, time, and money). It is important that the implementation team's charter for post implementation activities is focused on these same concepts for continuous improvement.

Include training as a part of the plan.

An employee with a very strong understanding of your business processes will be better able to identify an opportunity for further improvement than someone with a marginal understanding of the business. The more you can do to educate your employees, the greater the benefit you will receive from them. Training users on the new software application during your implementation is a necessary first step, but needs to be followed up with regular assessments of additional training needs. The business environment is very dynamic following your implementation.



New procedures will need to be developed as you encounter new situations, and existing procedures will need to be revisited as you identify potential errors. Continued training and re-training on all processes and procedures must be an ongoing focus of your post implementation plan.

About the Author

Marianne Chikos, director of consulting services, Consona ERP, joined Intuitive in 1998, and is based in Kirkland, Washington. She manages the Intuitive implementation and technical consulting departments, and is responsible for the development, training, and performance of the consulting staff. She takes ownership of all Intuitive customers in their implementation phase, providing Consona management oversight into new customers' projects.