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Finding Success From On-Premise to Off-Premise

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As the CIO or technology strategist you have made the decision to move to an SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) model from the old in-house supported standard. The benefits have outweighed the initial costs and the total cost of ownership is inevitably more affordable for your organization to satisfy business needs. Now it is more important to succeed in this implementation and change. How do you quickly get current staff on board to replace existing systems? There are three defining moments to guaranteeing the off-premise success – 1) winning over the business, 2) gradually deploying groups of functionality, and 3) adaptability and mentoring of existing staff.

Whether you selected Salesforce.com, CRM On Demand, Net Suite, or Right Now, the process was no doubt grueling and competitive and demanding in nature. After all the sales calls, demonstrations, research, vendor customer discussions, and trial software periods, your neck is on the line for making the decision. Do not let all the efforts be wasted with no user adoption or employee dissatisfaction, or worse, halt in business operations. Find success by implementing these three strategies.

1. Detangle complicated business processes.

Set up an advisory committee of four business champions (competent and not-so-competent system users), two business analysts (an external consultant that understands both the old and new system and one that is fluent in business process reengineering), and one external technical architect (competently understands the true nuances of both old and new systems – not a “good talker”). The goal of the team is to simplify the top 10 business processes to three-four clicks in the new system with as much automation for checks and balances. Ultimately this means the committee will provide the following deliverables: functional gap analysis, technical gap analysis, use cases for new system, new data model (capable of storing data for all the existing silo applications that have similar or associated functionality defined in the new processes), functional design that identifies the new and improved maneuverability, and an integration design that provides details of data integration, synchronization, and migration.

2. Move sets of functionality and users at a time.

The big-bang approach will not work for multiple reasons – over-allocated budget, over-extended resources, and not enough time. There are too many risks to account for when multiple systems and integrations are involved. The best strategy is to identify the top 10 processes to replace with the required external systems and data integration. Plan to deploy 5 processes with the appropriate functionality and reporting with a group of users. Migrate the relevant data and include the important integration from external data sources as required. Allow 3 months breathing room to flush out problems and provide enhancements. Deploy the next 5 processes and follow the same cycle. Include reporting in each phase to not only track success but compare reporting results from pre-migration to implementation.

3. Remove the nay-sayers and uplift the “yay-sayers”.

People can make or break this success. There is no question there will be resistance to change from both the business and IT staff. The business users are accustomed to an old system and are used to certain work styles for their productivity. Developers have their expertise. Support staff has defined methods of providing solutions for their internal customers. Off-premise solutions usually mean “configuration” and reporting that the business can handle which moves some duties from IT to business. To handle the awkwardness, make sure DBAs are heavily involved with data warehousing, synchronization, and integration with the new solution to migrate data successfully. Hopefully you selected an SaaS model that can utilize the in-house development expertise in creating web services either in Java or .NET. Choose a small number of “adaptable” employees that understand the on-premise solution and hire top-notch consultants (not the 5-for-1 staffing organizations) to work with them to ensure they can enhance and develop expanded functionality for the SaaS model after deployment. Include 20-25% more time in your project plan to account for the mentoring.

Although the initial reaction to change may be challenging, it will be rewarding based on the savings and opportunity to change negative perceptions of slow-performing and costly on-premise solutions. If the strategy follows a plan to move with ease, acquiring user adoptability along the way, the road to off-premise can be the smoothest deployment encountered.

About the Author:

Temeko Richardson has over 10+ years of strategic and tactical experience in P&L management, operations, business development, and process improvements. Temeko has 16+ years of experience in technology strategy, systems analysis, development (Waterfall and Agile), and business intelligence forecasting in the finance, government, and consumer good industries. Expertise includes .NET development, enterprise solutions (Salesforce.com, Oracle OnDemand, Siebel and SAP FICO) and business intelligence solutions (OBIEE, Micro Strategy, and Business Objects). For more information regarding assistance in developing strategies to move to off-premise solutions, email rfa@tsgonestop.com