



Implementation: 9 Steps to Successfully Deploying a New System

Whether it's a government election official needing to modernize their voter registration system or an organization wanting to improve member voting by adding an online component, the concept of implementing a new technology can be daunting.

Even when you understand that the risks of continuing "business as usual" can lead to compromised security, voter disenfranchisement, or jeopardize the integrity of election results, it's natural that there still might be an apprehension about making a change. The current technology or process may be time-intensive and inefficient, but you've grown used to it and have learned the right workarounds needed to get through your day. It's so tempting to embrace the idiom "better the devil you know!"

But, for most officials using technology from 15 years ago, ignoring the problem is not an option. Change is not only inevitable, it's imperative.

While choosing the best technology to improve your voting ecosystem is important, working with the right people is just as critical. It's crucial to find a trusted partner for a successful transition for any new system and process. Education and guidance by experienced professionals can eliminate the barriers to change, making your modernization as painless as possible.

Here are 9 project management steps to ensure the successful deployment of a voter registration or online voting system:

- 1. Communicate to Managers and Administrators Throughout the Deployment**
The word "communication" has become a bit of a cliché, but you must share information and engage in active listening with your entire network of stakeholders in order for plans to proceed smoothly. Engage with staff to ensure that each individual is well-informed of the changes occurring and that each individual feels included in the process. Ultimately, this strategy will leverage stakeholders' relationships, authority, and knowledge to garner buy-in, which will aid in a smooth transition.
- 2. Inform and Educate the Users Before Deploying**
Develop an information and training strategy for users, and test the strategy on the users in your pilot group. By educating users about functionality, you'll have the opportunity to address and alleviate

their concerns and show the users how ultimately the system will improve their workflow, gaining early support from the people who will be using the system every day.

3. Document the Implementation Steps

Include step-by-step instructions for setup and configuration of software and application settings in the deployment and configuration plan. Test the documented plan during the pilot project. Revise the plan as needed during testing to ensure successful implementation during deployment.

4. Pay Attention to Detail

The simplest logistical details must be planned for any deployment. Anticipate and prepare a checklist of the logistical details, dependencies, and ownership of each deployment step. Including all items ensures that your team is properly prepared.

5. Include Risk Management in Each Phase of the Implementation

Analyze the risks that are introduced at each phase of the pilot project. For each identified risk, define a risk mitigation plan that is aimed at preventing a risk from materializing, including preventive actions to be performed and responsibilities. Continually update your plan with identified risks and results at each phase.

6. Properly Document Any Changes

Document any requested changes to the product or process, along with the anticipated outcomes so that changes can be implemented in the most effective way. Analyze performance data and evaluate effects of the change. Proper documentation of changes and effects is important for a successful deployment.

7. Test the System and Processes in a Pilot Project Environment

As you plan deployment, it is important to test configuration variations and deployment scenarios. Testing helps ensure positive results in your production environment at deployment time.

8. Create, Document, and Test a Backup and Recovery Plan

Incorporate backup and recovery preparation into your deployment plan. A solid backup plan enables you to recover more quickly and easily if you encounter any problems during the deployment.

9. Engage Help Desk Support/Training

Involving your helpdesk, support, and training staff in early stages of deployment planning and pilot efforts can improve your deployment support and end-user adoption. Early involvement provides your support staff with exposure to valuable experience and knowledge from the beginning.

As scary as change can be, working with a technology partner who follows good project management processes will help make your transition as smooth as possible. The only regret you'll have is that you didn't upgrade sooner!

