

HOW TO ENSURE FAILURE OF A WMS IMPLEMENTATION

Approaching a WMS implementation focusing on the software technology will only create problems in the warehouse, not solve them.

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1. FOCUS ON THE TECHNOLOGY, NOT YOUR OPERATIONS.

- Only look at the latest and greatest technology; the latest technology is always better.
- Don't worry about how well the technology fits within your organization's operating environment; trust the technical specifications that state the system is an "open system architecture" and communicate easily across operating platforms.
- Don't worry about how much user action is required for executing an action or process; assume that color screens and icons make it easy to enter data.

2. ASSEMBLE A PROJECT TEAM WITHOUT CONCERN OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CURRENT OPERATIONS.

- Don't worry about the operational objectives; the software is the area you need to be most concerned about.
- Don't take the time to document and understand current processes and procedures. Assume that under the new system they will change anyway so they shouldn't be a major concern.
- Don't include individuals directly involved with the day-to-day operations in the design process since they won't or don't understand the technology.

3. SELECT AN ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN OPERATIONS TO LEAD THE DESIGN AND MANAGE THE PROJECT.

- Don't worry about how the WMS software will affect existing business processes not related to WMS; there won't be any impact since the WMS will only be used in the warehouse
- Don't worry about how the new software affects other existing business systems like order management or transportation management; assume the interface between these systems will take care of any problems.
- If operations has concerns about how the system design process is progressing, allow them to only view specific areas they have questions about.

- Don't worry about business procedures that haven't been covered under the system design; any problems not covered during design can be addressed when testing begins since its so easy to change the software.

4. USE A "FREE FORM" MANAGEMENT APPROACH.

- Just have a rough estimate of the project budget, and only take the time to track the status of expenditures when you have free time.
- Develop a project ROI based on projections provided by the WMS software sales staff.
- Don't worry about having regular project meetings or updates; use email as the primary project communication tool.
- Have many people individually track tasks or issues separately. Expect this to allow broad coverage of issues and tasks, making sure that everything is covered.
- Allow the design of the system to be continually changed and revised. Assume the latest application development tools are perfect for "on the fly" changes, which can be easily incorporated.

5. DON'T WORRY ABOUT HAVING A PROJECT SPONSOR IN UPPER MANAGEMENT.

- WMS projects are simple and easy to manage, with no need for a project sponsor.
- As the project moves along there will be many individuals who want to align themselves with the project. Trust that these people will be sure to stay on board with the project as the implementation date approaches.

The above items are compiled from actual experience acquired from implementing WMS and other software applications over many years. The list illustrates one of the greatest pitfalls we face with the continually expanding capability of technology — too much reliance on software at the expense of basic DC operations and common sense. Approaching a WMS implementation focusing on the software technology will only create problems in the warehouse, not solve them.

When preparing to implement any system, whether a WMS, Transportation Management System (TMS), Application Interface System, or ERP, it is a mistake to design first then review how the design fits current operations and practices. This will result in an



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over-engineered system that may provide a great deal of designed functionality but that same functionality (and the effort and dollars expended to create it) may not be needed once the system is implemented.

Before undertaking a WMS implementation, those involved in the process must have a thorough understanding of current operating procedures, what works well for the organization and what needs to be improved or eliminated. This can be accomplished by creating flow diagrams for the different operating areas of the warehouse. Once the current processes are defined, you are then in the position to review your methods and design a system based on the areas that can be improved, eliminated, or left as they are. A well-designed system based on a clear functional specification will provide structure to what can be a very complicated process.

No matter how you approach designing and implementing your WMS application, never lose sight of the fact that your mission is to get the product out the door and to the customer.

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