

## Question

**My company is about to make a major investment in a new management information system. How can we ensure the technology will work for us?**

### Advisor's opinion

The first thing you need to recognise is that technology in itself will do very little for you. Ultimately, the success or failure of a new system relies on how well you manage three key elements, **Programmes – People – Processes.**

**Programmes** are the systems being implemented. For these to be correctly configured, you must have clearly defined business objectives. For example, an objective could be to produce management information directly from the system without the need for complex Excel spreadsheets.

**People** include senior management, project managers and users. Your senior management must be committed to the project and ensure that adequate resource is provided.

Appoint a project manager. They should take direct responsibility for the project including liaising with the supplier. It is important that your business owns and controls the project rather than delegating responsibility to the supplier or an external consultant. After all, it is the business that will own the system and, therefore, should have ultimate responsibility throughout the project.

Users have a critical role to play both at the design and implementation stages. Involving them early in the project should aid transition from familiar processes and systems to new ones.

The introduction of any new technology is likely to have an impact on the business **processes** surrounding the systems. This area is often underestimated resulting in unforeseen delays and costly complications as practical implications of the new system arises.

*Key points to remember:*

**DO:** Clearly identify what you want to achieve in business terms.

Secure the support of senior management.

Plan the project in detail.

Appoint a project manager.

Involve users throughout the project and keep everyone informed of progress.

Ensure that you carefully consider the practical implications of the new systems on surrounding processes.

**DO NOT:** Expect miracles.

Underestimate the amount of time and effort required.

Limit the amount of training for users.

Attempt to take on too much at one time.

Forget to manage the business during the period of change.



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