



COMMON TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

When implementing business management software, it's crucial to know what to expect. Here's a breakdown of common implementation tasks, as well as examples of how long those tasks might take. Consult your business partner for additional information or if you have any questions. Timelines will vary based on your specific requirements; what follows will help you gauge the percentage of time you can expect to spend on specific tasks.

There are five phases to a software implementation project, and these phases can and probably will overlap. Based on a 10- to 12-week implementation, here's an approximate percentage of time you'll spend on each.

You'll note that the longest phase is the final phase; that's because you'll want to take the time to ensure the solution is meeting your needs. A significant amount of time should be budgeted to project management, which is a key component of all phases.

Project Preparation – 10%

When you prepare for a project, you'll want to identify a project manager who will oversee all aspects of the implementation. A business partner can play this role, or you can determine an internal resource for it. You'll need to prepare to kick off the project by determining who will be involved, both from a business requirements perspective and from a technical perspective.

During the project kickoff meeting, engage everyone who will be involved with the project to approve and commit to the timeline. Set goals and milestones. During this phase, a business partner will typically deliver and begin to install the software, though the installation can span several other phases as well. Make sure you conduct continuous project reviews to ensure you're on schedule.

Business Blueprint – 9%

To create a business blueprint that will help map how the software will work with your business processes, first gather user and process requirements. Consider asking users how they prefer to work, and keep those preferences in mind when you're documenting business process requirements. You can work with your

business partner to create a business blueprint that includes business scenarios, business processes, and process steps. Review the blueprint with your project team to ensure that it is accurate and comprehensive.

Project Realization – 10%

During this phase, you'll set up the system to prepare for rollout. Using the business blueprint, your team will configure your systems and customize your software to make sure that it meets your needs. At this time, it's wise to attend to any organizational change issues that can result from the new software. For example, will you require another IT person to manage the solution long term? Will the increases in efficiency resulting from the software mean that you'll need to reassign work tasks?

Your team will begin validating and testing the system, using your business data. You might consider asking for employee volunteers to test the software; this will help them become more at ease with the new applications. Also at this time, you'll want to plan for go-live and support, determine when the new software will go live, and how it will be supported as employees learn to use it.

Final Preparation – 11%

During final preparations, conduct software training for your employees. They can attend in-person training sessions or, if it makes more sense for your company, they can take advantage of e-learning, which is self-paced online training.

Your technical team or your business partner will test the system for readiness, and then move from your existing software to the new application.

Go-Live and Support – 60%

During go-live and support, your solution is up and running. You can gauge how well it's working by interviewing employees, taking a look at productivity, and assessing how much more efficient your business is. At this time, make sure that you document and address any outstanding issues.

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