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## A Hard Look at Software

LEARN HOW TO ADOPT THE LATEST PROGRAM, AND MAKE SURE IT WILL PAY OFF IN THE END.

by LEE GIMPEL - May 2009  
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It seems like new software is released every day - and who can resist being on the cutting edge, especially if these programs can help your business? But don't move too fast. Whether simple (email) or complex (customer relationship management), these programs aren't always easy to implement. In fact, a distressingly large number of software projects result in wasted time, money and, in extreme cases, the ruin of organizations. Thankfully, there is an art to executing a new software system successfully.

1. Be clear about **why you're adopting new software**. It shouldn't be because of slick marketing materials or that the technology is in vogue. Will it offer a good return on your investment? If not, speak up before your company is sucked into a frustrating failure.
2. Before you adopt new software, **get the support of the little guys** as well as the company's top brass. Of course it's important to have the CEO behind you,

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but try rolling out a new sales solution without a salesperson on the team, and you'll quickly run into a wall. "People often mistakenly think senior leadership can force users to adopt software by simply mandating it and shoving it down their throats. Not so," says Sue Raisty-Egami, founder of Sure Product Consulting. And the folks in the trenches frequently have the best ideas as to what new software should do.

3. Be sure to **define the mission**, its milestones and how you'll determine when it's been accomplished. To this end, fight the tendency to start with limited objectives, only to then add a laundry list of ideas. Jason Rothbart, vice president of customer success at GroupSwim, warns against such "scope creep" that will drag out a project, making it costlier and more time consuming.

4. **Carefully consider time and effort** involved before and after adopting new software. On the front end, Xavier Canez, a project manager with ARRC Technology, says companies fall prey to not budgeting enough time to properly evaluate offerings and then make ill-informed choices.

If you do decide on new software, don't allocate the project to the B-team, while reserving A-level employees for day-to-day projects. It's also no good if top employees are asked to work on the implementation, but only on top of their regular duties.

5. Remember the new program **must be successful in the long term**. This depends on good documentation, thorough training and continued use by employees.

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