

Editor's Note: Looking for answers to your tech issues?

Send your construction-related technology questions to heyfred@foundationsoft.com.

Q: I want to install a new accounting/project management software program, but I have some real concerns. A colleague of mine told me he spent thousands of dollars on a new system as well as many months devoted to planning and customization. Despite all that, many employees were unhappy with the switch and continue to resist learning the new software. He knows it's a good application, but he feels as though his employees are sabotaging the investment. I desperately want to avoid this kind of outcome. Any suggestions?

Tony

A: First, I want to congratulate you. Not just for your decision to use technology to boost your business, but also for considering your employees' role in its success. Did you know that a lack of user buy-in is the No. 1 reason new software purchases fail today? Failure occurs because:

- 1) The decision was made without user input.
- 2) The wrong software was purchased (often because there was no user input).
- 3) Employees assigned to new technology refuse to change.

How do you get employees involved and enthusiastic? It starts well before the actual purchase. Since many people will be using the software daily, don't limit the planning and decision making to just a few. When preparing your needs analysis, get all users involved; solicit feedback from

everyone on current software issues and problems as well as their suggestions. End user buy-in happens naturally when employees get the sense that their opinions have been taken into consideration. Next, once your software choices are narrowed down, invite key users to sit in on product demonstrations so they can ask specific questions and understand how the system works.

Keep in mind that the real work starts after the best-fit software program is chosen. When it comes time for training, make sure that the schedule is realistic and the methods allow for all learning types. Faced with the prospect of learning a new (and seemingly complex) software system while completing their daily (and long) list of tasks, it's easy to see why many employees are less than eager to take on the challenge.

Above all, owners and managers must be involved in the entire process and take an active role in the implementation. You must communicate to end users not only how the new system will make their jobs easier and more efficient, but also why it will improve the company's overall effectiveness and competitive edge. Employees are more motivated to learn something new when they see the project as worthy of their time and effort. With the right environment and good communication, Tony, you should be able to hurdle the roadblock of user buy-in rejection.

Fred ■

Disclaimer: Technically Speaking reserves the right to change names and edit questions for privacy, length and readability issues.

