



“Resistance to change could inadvertently block a company’s ability to grow and thrive.”

NO. 9: STOP END-USER REJECTION BEFORE IT GROWS

Editor’s Note: *Following is the ninth article in our ten-part series called, “Accounting Software Checkup: Ten Ailments That Can Hinder a Healthy Bottom Line,” by our regular columnist, Fred Ode. Each “ailment” is discussed in detail to help you determine if your seemingly healthy business has an underlying problem.*

Denial runs through many construction companies and is especially prevalent among dedicated staffers who are quick to protect their outdated accounting programs from would-be replacements.

Mainly, it has to do with perception vs. reality. Despite the fact that a current accounting software product is exhibiting unhealthy symptoms (redundant data entry tasks, limited reporting capabilities, etc.), many users are simply accustomed to these bothersome inefficiencies and can’t imagine that another system would be any better. That’s the perception. The reality is that these end users are often afraid of change, worried

that they personally will be held responsible if the new system isn’t an improvement or just not aware that anything better exists. And another reality? Resistance to change could inadvertently block a company’s ability to grow and thrive.

The success or failure of a construction company’s technology initiatives is basically determined by how well its executives can lead and manage their staff into accepting change. Most business experts agree: People issues, rather than technical problems, pose the greatest challenges to new technology success. Understanding the causes of end-user rejection (and unintentional interference), therefore, is something that

10 Ailments That Can Hinder a Healthy Bottom Line

1. The Symptoms of Spreadsheet Addiction
2. Tired of Redundant Work and Double Entries?
3. Has Inconsistent Job Cost Reporting Left You Feeling Irritable?
4. Get Relief from Weak Financial Reporting
5. Are Untimely and Inaccurate Billings Causing Financial Distress?
6. Warning: Unmanageable Growth Can Lead to Excess Staffing
7. Learn to Use Your CPA in a Well-Balanced Way!
8. Is Pressure Building Between Accounting and Field Staff?
- 9. Stop End-User Rejection Before It Grows**
10. Technophobia: The Hidden Disease

■■■ Accounting Software Checkup

contractors must keep in mind as they evaluate current software and consider new purchases.

So, how does a contractor know if his/her company is susceptible to software user sabotage? The following questions may provide the answers:

1) How is change managed? Does it come from the top... or is it a hodge-podge system of technology initiatives chosen randomly to deal with the problem of the day? To create real change, managers and owners need to be proactive. They need to create a vision for change and then empower employees to attain that vision. When evaluating current software or considering new technology, for example, managers and department heads should be actively and openly involved.

“ For whatever reason, people often continue doing what they’ve always done—even if what they are doing is neither productive nor efficient. ”

Their involvement will ensure that the software not only meets specific objectives, but also stays in line with the company’s overall goals and long-term plans.

2) Are the right people on the bus...and in the right seats? According to best-selling business author Jim Collins, in order to adapt to a changing world, companies must begin with “who” rather than “what.” The key is to first get the right people on the

bus before focusing on where to drive it. Yes, skills and experience are important, especially in the highly-specialized field of construction accounting. But when you have people with the right attitudes and the right aptitudes, it makes changing direction that much easier. Once you have accomplished that, Collins says, “the problem of how to motivate and manage people largely goes away.”

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3) How is resistance handled?

Whether it's a small change or a large one, contractors must be prepared to deal with the resistance that will undoubtedly come. People resist change because it means giving something up. Changing a software program, for example, might make one employee feel anxious about altering familiar tasks and routines. Another employee might be upset about severing a long-time relationship with a software vendor. And yet another employee might feel the loss of being the "expert" at that particular program. Business owners must take these concerns seriously and recognize the loss while communicating the benefits and gains that will be replaced.

Much like the loyal employee who shows up for work day after day with a persistent, hacking cough but claims to be "just fine," many software users are in denial about their current software's capabilities and efficiencies. For whatever reason, people often continue doing what they've always done—even if what they are doing is neither productive nor efficient. This kind of denial has the power to stop a contractor's technology initiative dead in its tracks.

Avoiding the problem of end-user rejection is no easy feat. It takes a proactive construction business owner who is committed to hiring the right people. It takes a construction business owner who understands why people resist change and the best ways to handle it. Most of all, it takes a construction business owner who recognizes that change is part

of doing business and that there is always room for improvement. ■

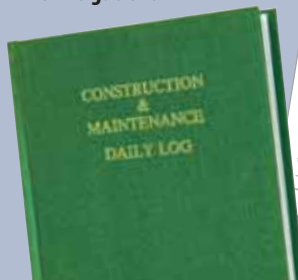


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