

By Donald Rote

A typical implementation is often not the “ideal” implementation.

As a Meridian Global Reseller and implementation consultants for Prolog, as well as other construction applications, I see a variety of operating environments and a spectrum of budgets and skill sets. Among the variety, one constant is clear. Many companies are looking for the successful deployment of software, but are not completely committed to what successful deployment requires.

When our clients request an implementation proposal, a plan is created that encompasses discovery, installation, customization, configuration, integration, reporting, training and support. Time and money often determine the client’s ability to engage in these needed steps. So all too often a client accepts only 20-30% of the proposed implementation plan. But many clients come to a realization after going through with a partial implementation plan—it costs more and takes longer to do it twice.

We encounter a great number of clients that “don’t need our services to get up and running” but just need a little training. But before training can begin, discovery serves to clearly lay out standard procedures and define roles for usage. If these and other important elements are not defined in advance, much of the time allotted for training is often spent resolving these issues and defining the way in which Prolog will be used.

As consultants, our goal is to make an organization operational and help its team best use its resources to produce value from the solution. A successful implementation requires that each of the implementation stages—discovery, installation, customization, configuration, integration, reporting, training and support—is well thought-out and carried to completion.

Discovery typically involves the senior management staff from a client company and Project Manager from ROTECH. During this multi-day session, we explore the existing operation and seek alternative methods that offer improved efficiency and better data. Upon the completion of Discovery, a formal implementation plan is presented that encompasses all phases of deployment.

Installation includes identifying how and where the software will be installed. Many clients utilize Terminal Services or Citrix for remote access and may require the assistance of an independent IT firm.

Configuration includes developing Security protocol, modifying the user interface with custom fields, and using the language manager to ensure that the terminology is acceptable to the client company.

Integration can include developing custom databridges to current applications or data migration from legacy applications. Many clients maintain master contact databases in existing data sources. This data often requires cleaning and parsing prior to import.

Reporting is a significant task for many clients. Because successful companies are accustomed to existing report formats and each project owner has specific reporting requirements, a variety of reports are identified and modified prior to training.

Training is offered in a variety of methods. Some individuals require a general overview to understand the big picture while others benefit from education on specific tasks. Team training provides the end-user a realistic training experience that involves actual project data while the client company minimizes down-time.

Support is provided via an internal helpdesk in combination with the support available from Meridian Systems. Many clients formalize a support plan to monitor usage and document recurring issues. Support calls are often process related and stem from lack of defined procedure. As a result, many companies will hire ROTECH to develop an Operations Guide for Prolog Manager.

In today’s tech-heavy business environment, a plethora of software is available. Mature product lines have tens of thousands of users and some, like Prolog that has been on the market for more than ten years, have developed comprehensive, best-of-breed solutions. There are popular applications for every aspect of the construction process—estimating, bid analysis, scheduling, accounting and project management.

When planning to implement one of these solutions, develop a plan, draw from employee experience and consider the advice of organizations that implement software every day. Analyze your competitors, your clients and—most of all—your own company. Software can’t solve all of your company’s internal operational challenges, but software that is fully supported by comprehensive implementation, can help your company to better define its processes and create a more efficient work environment. But you must garner support and be committed to what successful deployment requires—planning and commitment of resources. Only then will your company find the successful software deployment and solution value it’s looking for.