

## Successful ERP Implementations: Education and Training

In many ERP projects, as it winds to its closing months before the big rollout, thoughts turn to training the end users. There are two critical things wrong with this picture that is so often repeated:

1. The closing months are a bit too late in the process to think about the end users, and,
2. Training, is usually just that, showing the end-users how the new system works, completely missing the education piece.

To clarify, a term definition is in order. Education refers to the why, who, and where aspect of a topic whereas training covers the how. It takes time to explore the why, who, and where aspect. This involves taking the time to relate new processes to old, exploring new and different roles, understanding where along the business process activities occur, and tying that in with the how, or the training. Certainly all of this takes development and delivery time which brings us to why the closing months are a bit too late to think about the end users.

Let's discuss a different way of approaching this that leads to success with end-users, managers, and executives.

The starting point is the education of the staff. It begins with allowing end users the opportunity to understand the benefits that will be gained as a result of this new system.

Explaining, demonstrating, and letting the end-users experience why things are going to be done differently engages hearts and minds. This effort includes business process flows, interfaces, data flows, upstream and downstream affects. It involves lively discussions and exploration.

This naturally leads to who will be responsible for which pieces of data, who does what and where. It is very likely that new manual processes will need to be put in place to support the new system processes, don't forget to cover those as well. It allows time to integrate what the new system will mean to each person in their work day world.

Prepare and deliver the education portion early and often. No harm in over communicating, sometimes that is just what it takes for such massive changes.

Both education and training must be addressed effectively for a successful end result. Following this approach leads to productive end users. After all it is the people that use the system that makes the organization function.

Training, on the other hand, demonstrates, explains, and allows end users to experience the new system first hand. This is the time for hands-on to learn how things will be done. Design this to occur over a series of learning sessions leading up to just before the system goes live.



Like the education this effort is a process. The process approach leads to a confident, supportive, and competent end-user community at go-live.