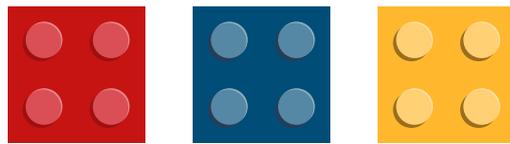


The building blocks of a successful HR system implementation



Let's get this project started!

Implementing new IT solutions and taking new software to use in organisations can be a cause for nightmares and anxiety. It can be a source of stress for any IT specialist, but given that many HR professionals don't have a software implementation background, it can be downright daunting. Stories of software projects that went wrong and caused chaos in their organisations aren't too hard to find.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be like that. The pitfalls are common enough that they pop up again and again, meaning that successful, tried-and-tested strategies also exist. We collected all the useful tips into this guide to help you avoid the most common traps and to make you an expert in HR solution implementations.

Our research draws on our experience from over 1000 implementations to date. We asked for real-life examples from our own experts – such as project managers and system consultants – and drew on their experience. This experience stems not only from Sympa, but from implementations across a wide range of other software and IT disciplines as well. We gathered all the useful guidelines and insider know-how that most consultants would never divulge, so that you can get a head start in becoming the expert for your organisation.

We are proud to present you a practical guide with steps you can take in order to ensure that your HR solution implementation will be a successful one, and that even though you might not be a technical person, you can be in control and play an active part in steering the project. We hope this guide gives you the advice and the confidence you need to lead a smooth and swift implementation process within your organisation, as well as help you in delivering the results you want.



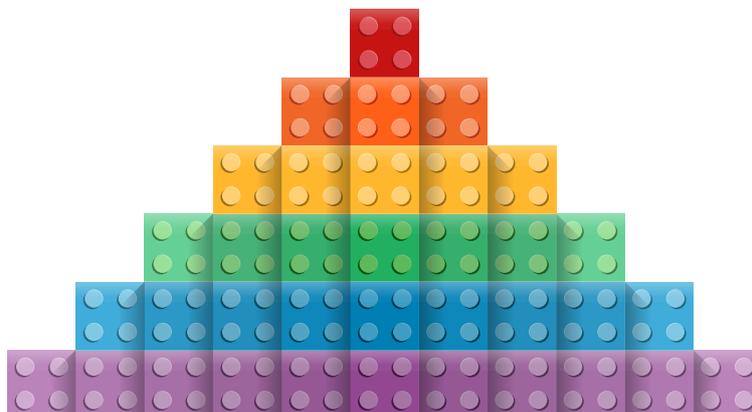
Every project needs a beginning, middle and especially an end

Before you get started, your first question to any consultant or software implementation team should be 'when can I get rid of you?' If there is no end point in sight, even from the outset, you're working with the wrong people.

If eternal consultancy is your software provider's ultimate goal, you'll be saddled with open ended costs and a project that's never truly finished. Good software companies want their best project teams back to take care of new implementations and to leave their customers in the position to run and develop their systems independently. Of course, good software providers normally offer an excellent support service, but no one wants to have to call support all the time.

It should therefore be in the interests of both sides to make a success of the implementation within a mutually agreed timeframe.

Stories of software projects that went wrong and caused chaos in their organisations aren't too hard to find.

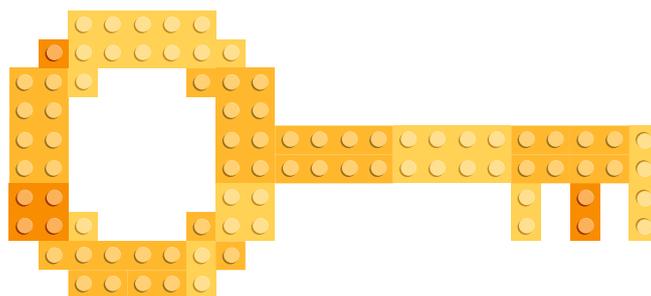


You are the key to Your success

An HR solution implementation should never be something that 'happens to you'. A successful implementation needs both parties to bring their skills and knowledge to the table. You as the customer understand where you stand and what needs to change, and you know what your specific targets are. Your HR software provider should not only know their technology inside out, they should also be able to deploy people with a depth of expertise in the customer's field. For instance, in the case of Sympa, we both create technology solutions and we know HR. In addition to that however, we make a point of understanding our customers' operations and we bring best practice to the table.

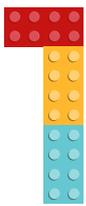
Now that we have gone through the basics, we are able to continue by revealing to you the five issues that most commonly pop up in HR system implementation projects, as well as in almost every other field of IT. Stay tuned until the end though, as we've also provided five solutions to prevent, or at least minimise any of these difficulties that commonly occur in implementations. We wish you the best of luck with your implementation project!

An HR solution implementation should never be something that 'happens to you'.



Five Common Challenges in HR System Implementations

– and how to avoid them



LACK OF OWNERSHIP OR GOVERNANCE

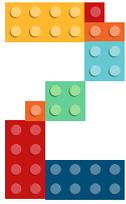
The clearer the responsibilities and stronger the sense of ownership of the project within your organisation, the better the results. Tasks such as change management, reviews of HR processes, and other aspects of internal implementation require your organisation's active participation. In many instances, it also demands your project manager to take charge.

Creating proper governance requires a clear framework, lines of management and responsibility. Your project manager should have a clear mandate to make necessary decisions within the required timeframe. Where decisions need to be referred up, senior management should be actively engaged and properly briefed so decisions aren't delayed.

Furthermore, it's very helpful for continuity to exist within your project team. If key people leave the project team during the implementation, their replacements will have to be onboarded and brought up to speed. Sometimes this is unavoidable, and in that event your solution provider should make sure that new team members are quickly able to fill their predecessors' shoes to reduce the possibility of delays.

In short: a well thought out **internal structure, with clearly set out timelines, roles and responsibilities**, minimises the risk of delays, frustration and of seeing resources go to waste.





INSUFFICIENT INTERNAL RESOURCES

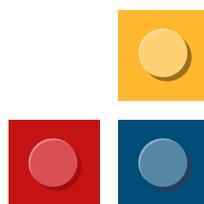
Sometimes organisations simply underestimate the amount of work that is involved, particularly given that there are some things your solution provider just can't do for you. Failure to allocate appropriate resources to an implementation puts projects at risk.

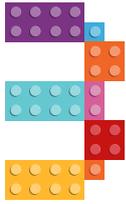
At the outset, it's very important that both teams, vendor-side and customer-side, understand clearly the tasks that they have to undertake and the amount of effort involved.

For instance, there's almost always a certain amount of homework or preparation that a customer needs to work through before the implementation can begin. In some cases, this might be cleansing or importing data. It might also be creating a clear picture of all the needs the software is supposed to address. Later in the implementation it might involve testing and fine tuning.

If you are fully committed, take responsibility and complete the preparation that your vendor team will ask from you, you can minimise delays and prevent the project from failing to deliver all the benefits you hoped for.

It's very important that both teams and all parties understand the tasks they have to undertake and the amount of effort involved in the project.





LACK OF COMMITMENT

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has a maxim that amounts to **'if you're in, you're in'**. You can disagree with colleagues but if you give them the go ahead for a project, you have to back them 100%. There's no point giving the green light and then hoping, secretly or not, for failure.

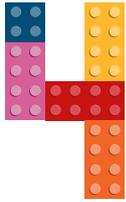
Common symptoms of lack of commitment include a lack of internal discussion during the project. If you're committed to doing something, you're going to want to talk about it and iron out every detail.

Implementation projects generally involve kick-off meetings, workshops (often throughout the process), and a wrap up meeting. It may be tempting to skip elements like these, however they're almost always extremely valuable. They keep the project on track and they keep the teams together, enthused and focused on their common goal.

Your organisation should also be committed to redefining your HR processes. This includes analysing which processes are working, which should be changed and which ones are irrelevant or outdated, since a new HR solution won't fix issues with your processes by itself. Implementing a solution is an ideal time to question all the things that are taken for granted within HR operations, and to conduct a thorough review. Implementing an HR solution makes you think your own processes through, question them, and forget the unnecessary ones. In the end this is work that pays itself back in several ways.

There's no point giving the green light and then hoping, secretly or not, for failure.





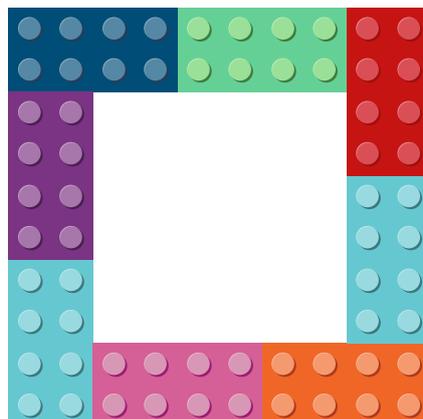
LACK OF COMMUNICATION

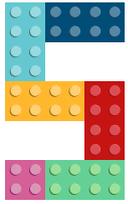
One can't lay all the responsibility for communication on either the customer or the vendor. Communication is a two-way process. A solution provider has to do its best to open up channels, listen, respond and be available – without reservation. **The best teams communicate freely, also across organisational lines.**

Be aware, if you find yourself in a situation where people in your organisation feel unable to ask a question either from the provider, or of their own team, that it's almost certainly something worth addressing. Part of it is just being human; we're always reluctant to ask 'stupid questions' such as 'how does this work?' or 'how can I get the best out of this software?' Mainly however, this is due to open communication not being encouraged within organisations.

If this communications gap isn't bridged, the consequences can be serious; bad information or data, the need to revisit element of the project and, inevitably, delays.

Be clear from the outset about who has knowledge of what areas and properly communicate this. Both sides should be aware that certain factors that may affect the timeline, availability of resources and the deployment of the system, should be considered and communicated clearly to the other party.





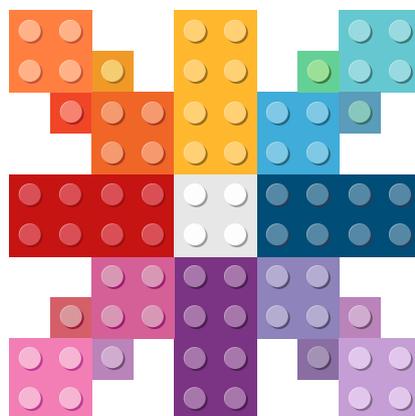
NOT KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF THE PROJECT

If you don't know where you want to go it makes it harder for you to get there. In almost every project agility is a bonus. Set clear goals from the outset, have regular check-ups to ensure you're on course to reach them. If one route is blocked, take another. If one feature doesn't deliver what you wanted, be prepared to rethink and redesign. A clear picture of end goals and the scope of what you want to achieve help ensure that however you get there you'll do so in the end.

The vendor's project team is there to help you reach your goals but it can't decide your destination for you.

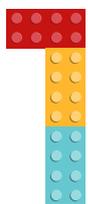
It helps to have a clear overview of your processes. If you decide on changes during the course of the project, which sometimes is inevitable, it does have an impact on progress and can result in delays.

If you don't know where you want to go it makes it harder for you to get there.



Five Top Tips for a Better Implementation Project

– and how to boost your chances of succeeding



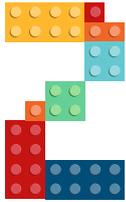
PICK A DEVOTED PROJECT MANAGER

As laid down previously, every organisation needs someone who will take ownership of the project. This person will act as advocate, evangelist, coordinator, manager and the first point of contact for the project team at your organisation.

The project manager needs an overview of all the ongoing activity within the project. Your project manager will need:

- The time and the skills to run an important project.
- To be available for the duration of the project.
- Sufficient resources for the project and the ability to secure them in case they aren't available.
- To be responsible that the organisation follows the schedule given and ensures the vendor is informed about the organisational deadlines.
- To revise a plan for the organisation to follow in order to complete everything on the agreed timeline.
- The authority, ability and willingness to make decisions in good time.

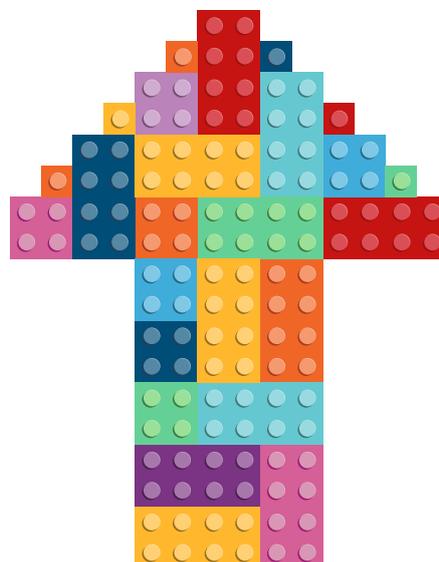


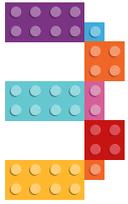


FORM A TEAM OF CAPABLE PEOPLE

An implementation project with a great team behind it will motor along in a way that one with a dysfunctional team won't. Your project team shouldn't be too big or it becomes unwieldy, however it should include representatives from all those departments with a stake in the project and encompass all the skills needed to deliver it. When putting together a team, consider the following:

- Hand out responsibility and give assignments to team members with the appropriate skills.
- The key decision-makers/stakeholder representatives should take part and prioritise relevant workshops.
- Dedicate resources for each area/content grouping.
- Overall responsibility should rest with one person who can identify and delegate tasks and who has overall control of the project.
- There needs to be a high degree of trust within the team.
- Everyone should be able to communicate in an uninhibited and open manner with colleagues and the vendor team.



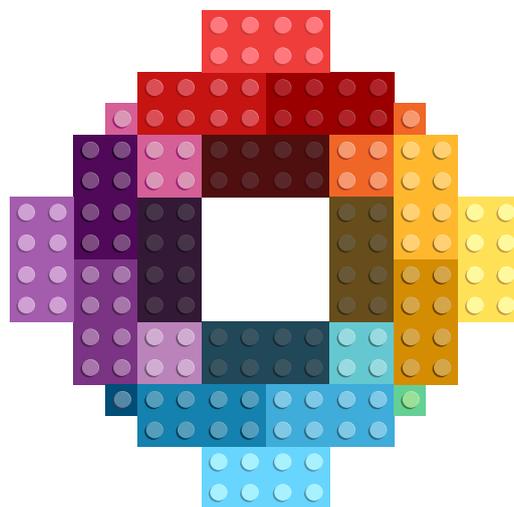


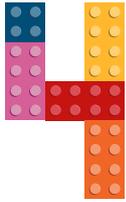
KEEP YOUR VENDOR IN THE LOOP

The ideal relationship between vendor and your organisation is relatively simple; both should be fully committed to the customer's success. The commitment should be there from the beginning of the sales process.

The more the vendor and your implementation teams function as a single unit the better, as it will address most of the potential issues. Four things to put on your checklist:

- Create a clear structure in order to make working together as easy as possible.
- Identify and tackle the possible barriers that block smooth communication.
- Be as meticulous as you can be when it comes to keeping each other in the loop.
- Ensure that all of your goals are well-aligned.

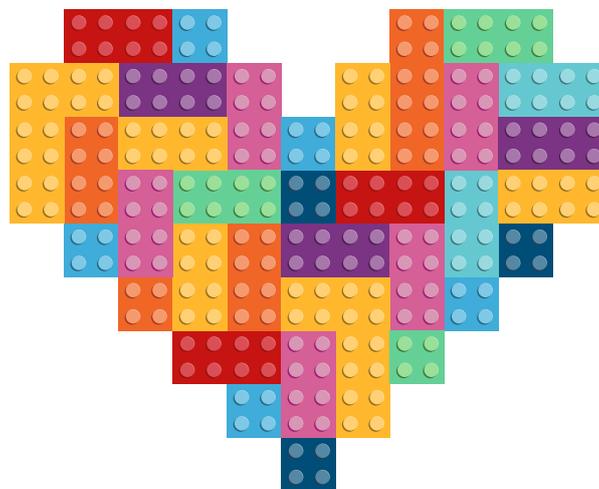


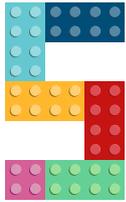


HAVE FUN

They say that if you do something you love, you won't work a day in your life. Applying the same philosophy on your implementation project energises everyone. It'll make you more productive, more determined to hit deadlines, and less stressed throughout. It is worth spending some time thinking about how you can make the project more enjoyable.

- Enthusiasm is infectious and powerful. If you're excited about the project it won't seem like work, and it'll gain real momentum.
- You're all in it together; enjoy in your colleagues' talents, have fun solving puzzles together, make workshops stimulating and enjoyable.
- Celebrate your successes. Keep each other's spirits up if the going gets tough.





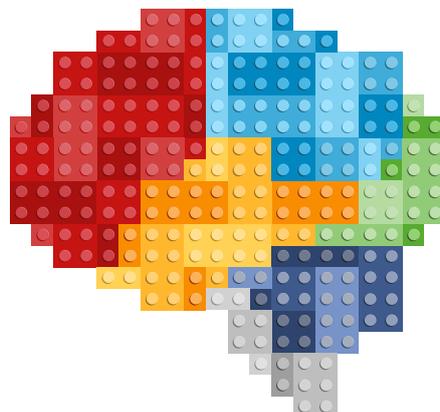
KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Be prepared to question everything. Just because something has always been done in a particular way doesn't mean that it always should be. At Sympa we always encourage an agile approach to projects. Be prepared to change course and try new things, especially if the approach you had originally planned isn't working as you hoped.

However, don't lose sight of the end goals. Your project manager should be keeping these at the forefront of everyone's minds throughout and be setting priorities to ensure that the most important tasks get the attention they demand.

- Your vendor might create new opportunities as the project moves forward. Be prepared to seize them by changing your processes where necessary.
- The system and processes often need to be adjusted in tandem.
- Learn from the past but focus on the future.

It is worth spending some time thinking about how you can make the project more enjoyable.





ABOUT US

Our fully customisable HR solution lets you focus on your people. We provide an easy, flexible and secure way to automate routine HR tasks and manage all your people data.

We are proud to be the fastest-growing HR solution provider in the Nordics. Today, over 1000 organisations around the world use Sympa as the secure and trusted backbone of their HR operations.

sympa.com