

THE HAND OVER OF DIGITAL PROJECTS

Companies are investing in digital solutions as never before, but the benefits often fail to materialise. To achieve a more manageable implementation process and thus better benefit realisation, companies must strengthen the interaction between the project and the recipient organisation when it comes to planning and initiating the operational transition

To achieve the effect desired from project deliverables, the recipient and project organisations should establish a close working relationship in the transition phase. Senior management must offer tools to support structured dialogue about the implementation process. This provides a better springboard for the company to maximise the return on its investment in digitalisation projects.

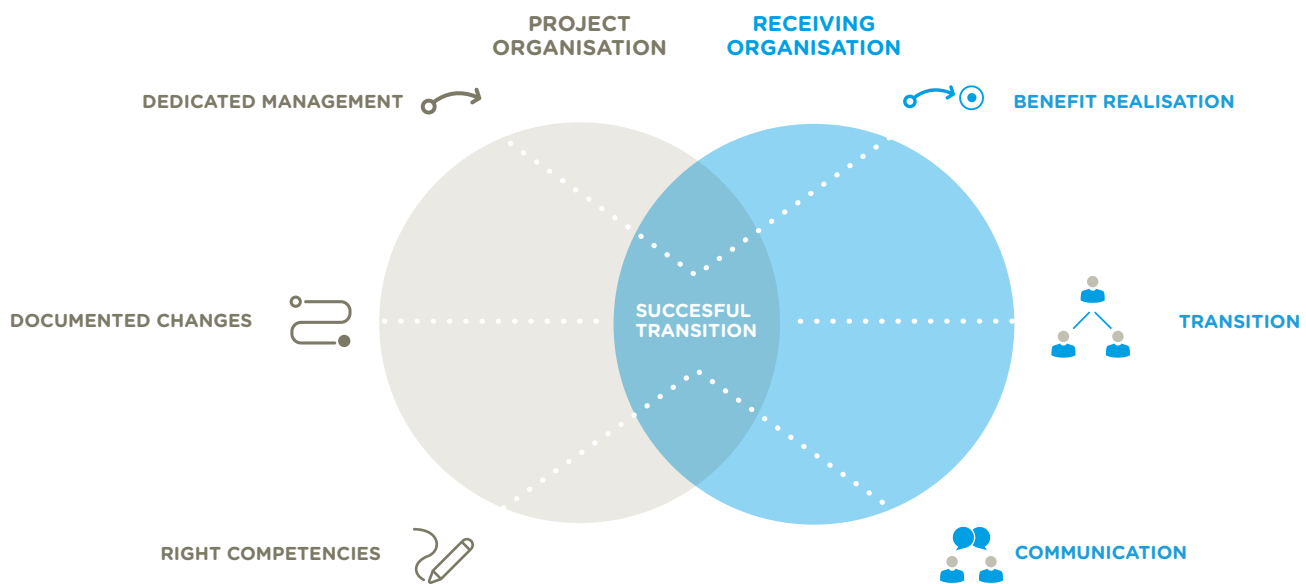
Dedicated management during the transition phase

As a rule, the strategic objectives to which a given project is to contribute are reasonably clearly set out. However, as the project start-up approaches and the transfer to the recipient organisation must be agreed on, the reality of the project and the recipient organisation's expectations or maturity are often worlds apart.

This distance makes it difficult to establish a common dialogue about the course of the transfer and subsequent benefit realisation work. One way to address this problem is to assign separate management responsibility for the implementation process and set specific, quantifiable success criteria for the transfer itself. An implementation storyboard can be a strong aid in clarifying agreements

DEDICATED MANAGEMENT DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

A successful operational transition depends on the presence of the right competencies as well as a common understanding of business processes. Finally, the management setup - roles and responsibilities - must be clearly defined



and transfer deliverables, and should include when and how the recipient organisation will be involved in the actual transition phase.

Documented changes to business processes

The ongoing work of realising defined benefit targets depends heavily on how well the business processes are managed, and, in particular, which elements are affected by a given project. Digital business processes generally extend across multiple organisational units – and in many cases also companies and/or authorities. Accordingly, a digital solution will often impact areas beyond the recipient organisation, which is thus not a sharply delineated entity. Therefore, the implementation process should include a clear, precise plan for how to handle the interplay between the new business processes that come with the implementation. The need to document new and changed business processes should be taken seriously, and a plan for adapting them to the recipient organisation should be prepared, with input contributed by both the project and the recipient organisation.

Establishing the right competencies

It is imperative that the recipient organisation's employees and managers possess the digital competencies needed to achieve the defined benefit targets. Digital competencies are to be understood broadly, and also include the ability to act in a digital context, contribute

to ongoing process optimisation and benefit realisation as well as engage in digital dialogue with customers and business partners. Competency development activities must be initiated according to a consistent, well-managed plan that is carefully coordinated by the project and recipient organisations. A methodical approach in which the need for competencies is defined and related to the current competency level is a must for initiating the right competency development activities and thus putting employees and organisation in a position to work with the new solutions.

Benefit realisation

To support benefit realisation in a cross-organisational perspective a follow-up model should be established. Based on the benefit targets set, the model should be able to support feedback from practical day-to-day activities and hence to prioritise and initiate ongoing adjustments to the modified business processes. This follow-up model must be set up in the recipient organisation, as this is where the relevance of the desired adjustments can best be assessed. As well as prioritising initiatives, the follow-up model must also have a budget to put any initiatives into practice. This budget must cover more than modifications to the IT solution – for example, establishing new functions or investing further in competency upgrading.




Transition

The transition from the project universe to the sphere of the recipient organisation is one of the most challenging phases of a project, and the risk of losing any value creation at this stage is high, unfortunately. For an organisational change to be successfully implemented, it must be managed as a change project proper, anchored in the recipient organisation's management. The roles and responsibilities of all the employees and business processes concerned must also be addressed. A systematic mapping of the change faced by the recipient organisation provides a good implementation platform for the change project.

Communication

Establishing special managerial responsibility for the implementation process generally also highlights the importance of the communication task to be carried out. During the implementation process, a growing number of people in the organisation will need to know what is going to happen and how this will affect the situation of both the company and its individual employees. In large projects, establishing a communication plan is a discipline in itself, as is ensuring that the communication task creates clarity and peace of mind during the implementation process.

ACTION ITEMS

-  **Agree on a structure and methodology that will ensure the right competencies are in place and involved in the operational transition**
-  **Have a handle on the organisation's business processes and, not least, on the ultimate impact of the project deliverables**
-  **Establish a management team dedicated to the implementation process – the transition from project to operations**