



## Ten Tips to Help Ensure a Successful New Project

By Ward Keever, CTG HealthCare Solutions Executive Director of Executive Services

Launching a new project, especially a large and important one, represents both a challenge and an important milestone in a CIO's career. To fulfill your role as an agent of positive change, it's vital to afford yourself every opportunity to be successful, minimize risk, and establish yourself as an executive who can deliver on time and under budget.

The first essential is to get started correctly and stay on course. Given all the other priorities and day-to-day pressures that require a CIO's attention and time, it's all too easy to lose focus and put the project in jeopardy. Here are a few ideas to help ensure success.

- 1. Spend Time Planning:** Start by identifying an 'evangelist' within your organization who will champion the creation and pursuit of your project. Take ownership of the planning process and invest the time necessary to work on the plan. Formulating a solid business plan will help you clarify your direction, gain buy-in from stakeholders, identify risks, and confirm your project's feasibility.
- 2. Stay True To Your Vision:** Projects that are compatible with your vision are more likely to succeed and win the support of your staff, constituents, management, and others.
- 3. Practice Good Governance:** Get the support of your executive team and board early. If you have to fight the culture of the board or parent organization, the project will surely fail. Managing expectations is important. Be sure to keep your executive team and board informed whether they are for, against, or indifferent to the project.
- 4. Get Connected:** Leaders of large, leading-edge projects need connections to sources of expertise, as well as industry contacts. Broaden your existing network by attending conferences, joining organizations, and, wherever possible, taking advantage of your board's connections.
- 5. Ensure Adequate Financing:** Finding money is no easy task. It's smart to learn more about alternative sources of capital, including debt, and alternative financing. Educate yourself well and early in the process. Develop a crisp ROI presentation and present it frequently to audiences that can influence the availability of funds.
- 6. Organize A Strong Management Team:** What makes a good project team? For starters, the top person should have an entrepreneurial spirit and a track record in the

Louis Pasteur  
once said,

*"Chance favors  
the prepared  
mind".*

Take time to be  
prepared at the  
start and  
throughout the  
life of a major  
project. The  
fewer surprises  
the better—for  
both your project  
and your career!



application you're targeting. Ideally, teams should have not only functional experience but industry connections. Just as importantly, the people you hire—especially the head person—must have a passion for your mission and share your organization's values. Make the project the manager's sole responsibility or, if that isn't possible, establish clear lines of authority and responsibility to ensure decision-making isn't slowed by the needs of the corporation.

- 7. Form Strategic Alliances:** CIOs have discovered that collaborations with vendors or consulting firms are a great way to leverage resources, share expertise, and spread costs to tackle complex challenges. While partnerships can foster mutual benefits, the alliances exist only as long as they are advantageous to both parties. Even so, the concept of gaining advantage by teaming up with a company whose products or services align well with your own initiatives can be very appealing.

The challenge is how to ascertain a common definition of success and ensure that the entire project team is equally incented for success. One way is to create a financial bonus pool that includes—and rewards—all members of the project team, your staff as well as your partner's. Although this is not a common practice, it has worked well in every instance I'm aware of. Perhaps most importantly, a management review team properly comprised and representative of a true partnership with common goals will always agree on the results and whether to pay bonuses.

- 8. Measure Financial and Operational Performance:** Healthy revenues and profit margins are crucial to any major project. You must maintain adequate financial information systems to determine the health of the project and hold the management team accountable for making a profit. However, monitoring your bottom line is only part of the formula. It's equally essential to identify the other factors critical to your project's success, measure those metrics accurately, and implement a system for continually improving performance. Relevant metrics might include reduced operating costs, patient satisfaction, physician retention, delivery time, inventory levels, and employee turnover. And, don't forget that good, old metric, 'on time and under budget'.

- 9. Focus On The Constituents:** Every CIO seeks satisfied constituents who will be willing to partner with you again and again because they trust your commitments and services. Repeat customers come at a much lower cost than those who must continually be enticed into buying into a project. Put in place the proper mechanisms to control the quality of your products and services and monitor constituent satisfaction. In addition to working on core applications and services that build customer loyalty, IT departments must work on such issues as instilling a helpful staff attitude and delivering on advertised promises.

- 10. Adapt Quickly, Thoughtfully, and Strategically:** Problems may arise for a variety of reasons, usually due to overly optimistic projections regarding, for example, implementation dates or achievable results. Stakeholders will want to know what strategies you have in place to cope with this slippage. You may have to think about strategic alliances, different marketing strategies, or slashing costs. Remember: even the most promising new project may need additional resources to attain its promised deliverables.

For more information,  
contact;

Ward Kever, CTG  
HealthCare Solutions  
Executive Director of  
Executive Services  
ward.keever@ctghs.com