SAP Thought Leadership Paper
SAP Active Quality Management

Driving Excellence in Implementation – and Beyond

The Underlying Quality Principles

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The Best-Run Businesses Run SAP™

When implementing IT solutions to drive business transformation, an organization must understand what it takes to complete the project successfully, whether the project is large or small, whether implemented on premise or in the cloud. The principles of quality provide this understanding for steering committees, project team members, and stakeholders.

The 10 Principles of Quality

Achieving extraordinary business transformation through the implementation of an IT solution isn't a matter of luck. It requires careful planning and a commitment to 10 principles of quality. By applying these 10 principles, you establish predictability and transparency in your implementation project.

1. ANCHOR BUSINESS VALUE FIRMLY IN YOUR PROJECT

Throughout a project, numerous design and implementation decisions are made. To make appropriate and effective decisions, all involved parties must fully understand the project's strategic importance, its business objectives, and its key success criteria. These aspects should be tracked throughout the project to ensure the solution will meet the business requirements. This tracking also helps determine whether proposed changes to the project scope – whether big or small – are justified by the business value they may add. The business case for the investment should be clearly understood by implementation partners. Partners should be selected based on their proven ability to deliver on every aspect of the project from both a technical and business perspective.

2. DETERMINE THE REQUIREMENTS EARLY ON

Technical requirements must be determined early on in order to implement a feasible, affordable, maintainable environment that delivers adequately. To do this effectively, the application landscape and system architecture must be aligned with the business strategy. Preexisting assumptions should be reassessed periodically once the project has been started to monitor their impact on the project.

Relevant requirements regarding master data, interfaces, and legacy environments need to be analyzed early to allow for sufficient time to plan the related efforts. Involve business users early when collecting requirements and to help ensure buy-in to the final solution.

3. COOPERATE WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND USE A PROPER GOVERNANCE MODEL

Project team members and stakeholders must thoroughly understand the project's scope and focus on achieving its business objectives. To do this, a project charter must be shared at the beginning of the project to align stakeholders and facilitate the onboarding of the initial team as well as resources added later on.

Roles and responsibilities must be defined in the initial engagement phase so everyone involved understands the team structure, lines of communication, and who has the authority to make which decisions. Formal reporting, regular meetings of the steering committee, rapid escalation mechanisms, and a project team empowered to make the necessary decisions in a timely manner are instrumental in achieving project success. A project sponsor should assume responsibility for the success of the project from start to end. Audits at key milestones can ascertain the degree of compliance from both a business and regulatory perspective. Communication must be clear and transparent throughout the implementation, internally and with subcontractors, partners, and other stakeholders.

4. ENSURE TIMELY DELIVERY AND EFFECTIVE TRACKING

Agree on scope and ascertain that the resources available and timeline are sufficient to complete the deliverables at the agreed-on level of quality. All parties must sign off on the timeline, deliverables, and acceptance criteria. Any subsequent adjustments made to project scope or timeline must be considered first in light of business impact, and second as to whether they are realistic, relevant, and acceptable. Activities and tools must be in place to monitor time, budget, and deliverables. Key performance indicators for the project should be tracked closely and visible to all stakeholders.

5. STAFF PROJECT WITH SUFFICIENT, SKILLED, MOTIVATED PEOPLE

Carefully recruit your project staff and select your partner. Train them early so they understand the technical and functional context in which they are working, what design possibilities are open to them in that context, and the impact of their decisions. Throughout the implementation, the skills and competencies of the implementation team members should be reviewed regularly to verify that they continue to meet project requirements. Their commitment and time allocation should be assessed regularly and addressed when inadequate. And their level of engagement, motivation, and willingness to accept new solutions should be assessed on a regular basis. Team members should also be made

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aware of how their role in the current project can contribute to the advancement of their career.

6. APPLY APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGY AND PLAN FOR QUALITY

Methodologies and guidelines must be agreed on. A proven implementation methodology contributes significantly to project success, but it must be suitable for the specific project and its solution scope. A methodology backed by industry-recognized project management training and certification increases the degree of professionalism and efficiency with which the implementation is managed.

Everyone must work according to the same quality standards and understand the review methods and criteria to be used to measure the quality of project deliverables. If a project is critical or larger in scope, a dedicated quality manager role may be created.

A quality plan can serve as a neutral framework for ensuring that quality is built into a project from the very start as well as evaluating the deliverables against the agreed-on standards. In later stages of the project, during rollouts, and in new implementation projects, it can be used to leverage lessons learned.

7. IDENTIFY AND MANAGE RISKS AND ISSUES JOINTLY

Careful identification, analysis, and management of risks and issues are key to success. Regardless of project size, a formal risk management process should be followed and include organizations affected by the implementation as well as implementation partners. Revisit risks regularly, and consider third-party input at important junctions. Support the process with an effective governance policy, and prepare all parties to acknowledge risks honestly. Enlist their commitment in recommending pragmatic, rigorous mitigation actions and their readiness to implement those recommendations.

8. USE STANDARD FUNCTIONALITY AND BEST PRACTICES

Software configuration is very powerful, versatile, and far-reaching. Often through configuration alone, or through the use of solution templates, seemingly unique business requirements can be fulfilled, making major software modifications unnecessary. The result is the delivery of a more sustainable solution faster, at lower risk and at lower total cost of ownership in the long term. To put this into practice, all parties must be aware of what the standard software offers, be committed to leveraging it, and raise a flag when it is not used when it could be.

An objective third party should carry out quality assurance at key project milestones to make sure best practices are being followed and to help avoid developing unnecessary custom code or getting caught in "scope creep."

9. ACHIEVE OPERATIONAL READINESS

An appropriate application lifecycle management approach must be planned early so it is ready when the new solution goes live. Technical staff and support teams must be properly trained to maintain and support the software environment. Seasoned resources with past experience in operations should be included in the teams. Support and service-level agreements must be in place and clearly understood by the support team and administrators so expectations correspond to the agreed-on commitment. Backup and recovery strategies must be well understood and tested. Clear procedures for software patches and upgrades must be in place. Performance measures should be used and user feedback gathered to help optimize the support function.

10. USE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO TRANSFORM BUSINESS

Key to the whole-hearted adoption of a business solution – which can determine its success in transforming business – is organizational change management. For that reason, the impact that the new solution will have on employees, suppliers, customers, and management must be discussed, and the person responsible for organizational change management should be a long-standing member of the project management team. Carefully select the training and communication strategies that prepare end users to embrace new ways of working. Prioritize change management areas that have high impact on business results in order to achieve success with the business transformation and its new processes.

DON'T STOP HERE

Once you've gone live, don't stop. Verify that the business value you set out to achieve has in fact been realized. Continue to leverage what you've built and learned. Realize more value from your investment through new business transformation initiatives.

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In Search of Excellence

SAP'S COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Delivering software solutions that bring significant benefits to the business does not just happen. It takes careful planning and execution measured against established criteria for achieving excellence.

Drawing on the experience of tens of thousands of organizations that have successfully implemented software solutions, SAP developed a set of quality principles, which have been confirmed as fundamental for achieving excellent results.

A commitment to quality underpins everything we do at SAP. It is a core value of our organization. The focus on quality principles in implementations – reinforced through effective cooperation among all stakeholders – is intended to help our customers, our partners, and SAP achieve success together.

NOMINATE YOUR PROJECT FOR SAP QUALITY AWARDS

SAP presents quality awards to celebrate customers who apply these quality principles. If you have completed an SAP® software implementation, consider nominating it for a quality award to gain acknowledgement within your organization and recognition externally in the marketplace.

FIND OUT MORE

Nominate your project for SAP Quality Awards at www.sap.com/qualityawards.

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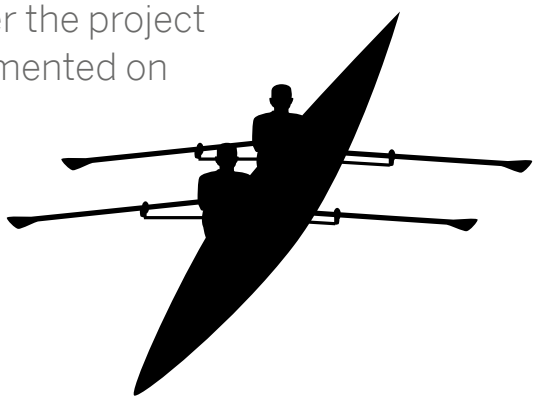

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