



Benefits Administration Guide

**Benefits
Administration
Implementation
Transition to
Ongoing Operations**

**How to Ensure a
Successful Transition:**

It's All in the Planning

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The Challenge

A client concluded a lengthy implementation, which brought together excellent subject matter experts and transferred huge amounts of requirements/knowledge to the new provider. After seeing the positive results of user acceptance testing, they determined it was the appropriate time to go-live. But six to twelve months after going live, the provider's ongoing delivery was not going as well as expected. This resulted in client frustration and a loss of trust with the provider.

This situation is common and can be mitigated by having a more focused and intentional transition from implementation to ongoing. This is critical because coinciding with moving to ongoing administration, many subject matter experts have moved on to other projects and the frequent communication between the client and provider is not the same as during the implementation phase.



Without a clear plan in place, projects can go adrift post-implementation.



How to Ensure a Successful Transition to Ongoing Operations

Curcio Webb's twenty years of experience assisting our clients through implementation projects has educated us as to where clients should focus to ensure a successful transition to the new provider.

Assuming the implementation was successful in the first place, planning a move to managing ongoing operations begins with a list of transition items, which both the client and the provider work through together. Having shared expectations of the transition mitigates frustration and results in better outcomes for both parties. The transition plan helps to reduce extra work and provides the client with a higher degree of confidence in the provider.

Albeit, the client and provider transition planning are tactical, it is designed to meet a client's overall strategy and desired outcomes in addition to supporting the business and human resource objectives including enhancing employee engagement.

Every successful transition includes the following:

1

The provider supplies a contact list, organizational chart and target roll-off dates for key staff. This is important as new team members join pre-existing meetings (from the implementation) and the implementation experts with client knowledge suddenly depart.

2

The provider includes materials for weekly administration reporting, including updates on call cases, methods for escalations, special projects, and activity trending. This is important as many provider and client team members withdraw and the focus shifts significantly from tasks to participant impacts.

3

The provider needs to confirm that all requirements and procedural documents are “current” and provided to the client. This is vital because late changes since sign-off are sometimes not documented and/or documents may be on an “implementation” SharePoint site with many versions but lacking a clear and final document.

4

The provider supplies an inventory of final versions/files for all custom communications to the client. This is significant for future reference of purchased work products—often by communications resources at the provider—who may have mailed the communication document leaving the client with only hard copies or working drafts in email.

5

The provider will draft an escalation matrix/procedure document, service level agreement targets, and set reminders to update (as needed) as team members transition off the account and email response time usually drops off significantly.

Every successful transition includes the following:

6

The provider and client will identify any “carry-over” implementation items and schedule as appropriate. This is significant as future enhancements should occur without additional costs (implementation carry-over) rather than be treated as a new project with any associated fee.

7

It is vital that both the provider and client schedule implementation debrief meetings. The purpose is to allow for continual improvement, in addition to signifying the completion. This results in the ability to let go of any baggage from a stressful implementation.

8

Review the scope of services document to confirm all scope was delivered, identify any gaps, and outline a remediation/acceptance plan. This is critical for a provider to signify completion of the implementation. This is also beneficial for the client to approve exceptions or confirm what may still need to be completed.

9

Obtain the first monthly invoice. It is crucial to ensure the invoice provides the right level of detail, accurate headcounts, accurate transaction counts, and the agreed-upon fees.

Conclusion

A successful implementation requires hard work and diligence. However, the positive results will ensure an opportunity to have a long-term relationship with the provider and eliminate a situation where outsourcing morphs into co-sourcing.

Lastly, it is important to describe the size and scope of client/project using metrics when possible, and to describe the challenge to ensure the client and provider have shared expectations regarding the transition. It is understandable that many clients are faced with significant challenges and a shortage of time and resources to address the myriad of issues. However, it is in the best interest of a client to take the time to set up a strong foundation with the provider and identify root cause/solutions before frustration builds and results in a breach of provider trust.



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