

**5 costly mistakes that
cause workflow
implementations to fail.**

Designed and implemented well, workflow systems provide a newfound order and simplicity. The results are higher productivity, smoother delivery of products and services and a better bottom line.

But while there are many workflow systems available, there are a few mistakes that cause their implementation to fail, time and time again. If you know what to look for up front, your implementation won't be one of them.

Over the last seven years we've seen workflow systems fail to deliver the forecast benefits and diagnosed five common mistakes. The consequences vary. Not everyone ends up in court with million dollar lawsuits, but all mistakes in business are costly. Workflow systems only exist to increase efficiency and when the gains aren't there, the cynics step in. Then you'll have unwilling staff to compound your implementation problems.

Get the full benefit of your workflow system implementation from the very beginning. Here's what to avoid:

WORKFLOW IMPLEMENTATION COSTLY MISTAKE #1:

The brains of the system, or “process logic”, are scattered all over the place.

RESULT: Inflexibility.

A workflow system is governed by a set of business rules called “process logic”.

In some workflow software, the process logic is stored in many different places, often on the pages of the software.

If, for example, the client decides to change employee fee structures, you want to be able to make these changes once — and in the one place. If the process logic is scattered, changes can result in wasting thousands of dollars in reprogramming parts of the software.

From our experience, this is the case in over half of workflow systems available!

The rule here is simple: the logic and the rules have to be stored as metadata in a central business rules database. To change the rules: change the data.

But not only that: By storing and processing the rules in one central database, the pages suddenly become much thinner, simpler and faster to load.

For example, take the workflow system used by the Community Relations Commission of NSW. It processes online bookings. Plus, the software calculates the interpreters' fees (they've got over two thousand full and part time panelists!) and invoices thousands of customers.

Just imagine the amount of programming required, if each time there was a change in pricing, the calculation had to be changed on twenty different forms!



WORKFLOW IMPLEMENTATION COSTLY MISTAKE #2:

Selecting a workflow platform that forces users outside the software — through poor handling of “process exceptions”.

RESULT: **Resistance.**

When people don't do what is expected of them, the software needs to deal with it. This is known as "process exceptions".

Every business analyst and every developer knows about process exceptions.

But here's the problem: the design of the mechanism that deals with these exceptions is often not “rich” enough, it's not sophisticated enough.

The result: a user has to go outside the software to function properly. Get a user to do that more than once and they'll come to a natural conclusion: “this workflow isn't designed around my work!” So now, they resist the program. At this point, they're one step away from hating it!

WORKFLOW IMPLEMENTATION COSTLY MISTAKE #3:

Allowing users to tick a box stating “I have done it”... without actually completing the task!

RESULT: **No quality control.**

A lot of workflow software allows the user to make a statement about job being done by placing a tick in a box stating, “I have done it”— regardless of whether it's finished or not. Some even allow users to pause a task, as they continue to work on it!

While this approach may work in situations where the system handles the most linear administrative processing, it's never appropriate in time critical, complex business processing.

In these situations, the completion of work has to be done in the software. This ensures a proper audit, tracking and quality assurance.

For example, in a fault management workflow software for a gas utility in Germany, it was mandatory that the user of the software submitted exact completion details. Can you imagine the consequences of workflow software allowing users to “fudge” completion where billions of dollars are at stake!

WORKFLOW IMPLEMENTATION COSTLY MISTAKE #4:

The workflow software can't easily bolt on top of existing in-house applications.

RESULT: **Reduced productivity.**

The times when clients would accept bits and pieces of software running various aspects of their business are gone. Today applications have to work with each other.

To increase profitability, workflow software has to be able to offer a number of integration options, depending on the environment. A platform that cannot be integrated results in wasting staff time and effort. Plus, the platform has to be able to grow – it should be able to run multiple processes in a parallel fashion.

WORKFLOW IMPLEMENTATION COSTLY MISTAKE #5:

Selecting a tech dinosaur — running their software on your PC's and not on the web!

RESULT: **Obsolescence.**

Workflow applications running on users' PCs are quickly becoming obsolete. But these systems are still selling!

The Web facilitates workflow involving internal, external and casual users. Each user gets access only to the functions and data they are allowed to access. This inclusiveness enables self-help, cuts costs and brings in efficiencies.

Both private and public sectors are increasingly moving towards the web. No software installations, no plug-ins. Simply log in, put in the password and work - via Internet/Intranet, mobile phone or handheld devices.

ABOUT SWS

Shared Web Services (SWS) is an Australian company specialising in business process automation using its proprietary workflow platform FlowConnect.

FlowConnect is a true web based business automation platform powered by high performance engine delivering business results for large corporate clients here and overseas.





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