



# Secrets to Successful Software Implementation

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With technology advancing so quickly, new and improved software solutions for the joinery industry are entering the Australian market on a regular basis. To remain competitive, it is essential that the industry continues to invest in software solutions that allow businesses to:

- ✓ move into new markets quickly
- ✓ work efficiently across both standard and custom joinery
- ✓ reduce manual processes
- ✓ reduce errors & wastage
- ✓ increase productivity and profitability

## Continuous Process Improvement

To keep improving processes and making productivity gains, it is essential to remain ahead of the competition. In our business we see that one area that sets the successful businesses apart from the crowd is the view that software is an ongoing investment, not a one-off investment.

These businesses understand that success is about ongoing process improvement. And software investment is one of the key ways to achieve this improvement. This may be through investing in regular upgrades to an existing solution or investing in new software solutions.

Many joinery businesses are in the position of working with software solutions that are currently only meeting around 70% of their needs. In this competitive environment you cannot afford to be working with tools that do not cater for 100% of your business needs.

But implementing new software into a production environment can be a daunting prospect. When faced with the challenge of implementing a new solution that can take help to take a business to the next level, many businesses decide to stick with outdated technology which costs them both time and money each week.

## Steps to Success

We have all heard of the cases where businesses have invested in new software and it has remained in the box, gathering dust as their team fall back to using old systems. This is not what anyone wants to see, certainly not the business owner who has not received a return on his investment.

But by keeping in mind a few key steps businesses can increase the chances of a successful CAD/CAM software implementation.

### 1. Choosing the right solution

**Current Shortcomings:** Understanding the shortcomings of your current solution is critical. There is a reason you are considering a new solution and it will help with the decision making process to list the shortcomings of your current solution. Your setout team are in the best position to assist with this. Some key areas are:

- having to redraw the model each time there is a change
- having to produce views/elevations individually
- not having the ability to draw complex or curved units
- high number of manual processes
- lack of association between the model and cutting lists, plot pages and rendered images
- lack of integration to the machinery

**System Requirements:** Listing what you are looking for in a system is the next great step.

- the type of technology you want to work with; 2D, Library Based, True 3D with custom design etc.
- the functionality required; CAD, CAM, Nesting, Machine links etc
- the type of work it must be capable of producing both now and into the future
- the nature of the system; integrated, specialist, visual, parametric etc

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**Supplier Requirements;** List what your expectation are from the supplier. Here are a few suggestions:

- unbiased information and professional communication
- Australian based support
- practical industry experience
- remote online sessions
- comprehensive after sales services such as setout staff for work overflow
- backing of large corporation for continuous process improvement

**Internet Research;** this is a quick & easy way to run through the different solutions available and compare them to your wish list. You will be quickly able to see:

- how each solution is promoted
- which markets it is targeting
- what support is being offered
- what other services are available through the local supplier.

This will give you a really good way to quickly cross of those solutions that are not in the running.

**Shortlist;** there is no need to work through every solution on the market. Many will have already been crossed off your list based on the criteria of functionality, target market etc. Once you have your shortlist you can proceed to the next step.

**Demonstration;** For the solutions that have made your shortlist request a demonstration of the solution; one that is targeted specifically for your business. Some great tips are:

- have the representative draw one of your units, on the spot
- have them show how their system can accommodate the standard units that are unique to your business, how can you develop your own library of units
- have them illustrate how their system can cater for work you may move into in the future
- listen to the questions that the representative asks; are they trying to learn about your business or simply running through an off the shelf demo

- ask them to address all of the current shortcomings with your current system and show how they can improve on it
- don't be afraid to ask more information or detailed answers to your questions. If the rep is serious about doing business with you they will be happy to accommodate
- involve all key members of your team that will be working with the solution

## 2. Change Management

Once you have made your decision on the right solution, you need to manage the change within the business.

**Key Influencers;** obtain the commitment of all key influencers in the business. Do not underestimate how hard change can be and by securing their commitment up front, the installation has the greatest chance of success.

It is vital to realise that each individual has a different capacity to cope with change. Some staff will look on the change as positive, as an opportunity to learn more and add to their skill set. Others team members will see change as a negative and frightening, something to be resisted. Internal resistance to the process is one of the key reasons for software installations not being successful.

**Project Champion;** appointing a "champion" can be a great idea. This is a person in the company who is responsible for:

- identifying and dealing with issues quickly
- gathering feedback for management
- identifying the main resisters and detractors amongst the team
- carefully managing that resistance

They will be someone who is positive about the change and has the power to positively influence the other team members. They don't need to have any special training to become the champion and could be a production manager, setout manager or a senior setout operator. The Champion can be made



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known to the team or can work covertly; that is your choice.

It is vital not to underestimate the resistance to change that can occur when you are asking people to move out of their comfort zone by adopting new technology. The project champion is someone who is tuned in to this and works to alleviate the frustrations that may occur.

**Realistic Goals;** one of the key reasons new software installations fail is having unrealistic goals. This can come from any level in the business. For example, the business owner might expect the transition period to be a matter of days. Or the setout operators may expect to be able to become experts in the new system immediately.

It is important to have a realistic timeline for the implementation of the new solution. For a comprehensive CAD/CAM solution this may be a few months, especially when balancing the need to continue to meet production deadlines.

**Different is not Bad;** it is natural that the new solution will be directly compared with the old solution, especially by the day to day users. But this is not fair or reasonable. It would be a fairer comparison to equate the new solution with the first few weeks of the previous solution, when it too was new and still being learnt.

If the team's expectations are that the new solution will work exactly the same way as the old solution then you will experience issues. This is where the Project Champion can step in – as someone with an overall view of how the new system will benefit the business they can refocus the team back to the reasons it was selected for the business.

## 3. Implementation/Training

**Training;** we all know it is hard to take time out of a busy production environment to learn a new solution. But it is essential to the success of the installation that all staff involved in the training are

able to devote 100% of their attention to the training. Interruptions impact the flow of the training and result in missing key points.

The location of the training is also important; it may be necessary to set up computers in a quiet location, away from the shopfloor. Schedule the training for when all the staff can focus on the new solution immediately after the training, do not schedule training just before annual leave for key users.

**Practice;** as with all things in life the more we practice the better we get. You did not become experts in your current solution overnight, and you cannot expect overnight success with your new solution. It is crucial to allow time to go over what was learnt in the training immediately, a delay of a few weeks can result in forgetting much of what was taught.

Even if the team need to continue to use the old solution to meet current production deadlines, carve out some time to continue to practice with the new solution. This goes back to managing expectations of both management and users.

## 4. Ongoing

**Tailoring;** initially after training there may be some further tailoring of the solution required to suit your specific processes. These are likely to be of a technical nature, especially if you have upgraded to a system that is a 3D CAD/CAM solution. The supplier's technical team will work with you to iron out these obstacles. This is not a time to panic and go back to your old solution; it is simply a natural adjustment period.

**Technical Assistance;** encourage the use of the technical support. If you have chosen the right supplier they will encourage you to work closely with them for the first few months to iron out any issues you are having and keep you on track. They will also be there to reinforce the training and should have good resources in place eg, electronic helpdesk, training manuals and videos to assist new users.



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**Support;** it is vital that management support set out operators as they transition to the new solution. Remember, they have spent years becoming experts on the old solution and cannot be expected to achieve the same level of expertise in a few short weeks. On the flipside if management is experiencing pushback by the operators, try to get to the bottom of the issue. Is it really the solution that is the issue or a resistance to change you are seeing.

With the help of these useful steps you should give your business the best chance of success.

## Top Tips for Software Success

- **Identify areas for improvement**
- **List current & future business needs**
- **Research the market**
- **Draw up shortlisted solutions**
- **Conduct detailed demonstrations specific to your business**
- **Appoint Project Champion**
- **Set realistic goals for transition process**
- **Practice, practice, practice**
- **Utilise supplier's technical support**