

CMMS: a planned attack

It has been said that ‘any tool is a weapon if you hold it right’, and this is never more true than when treading the minefield of choosing a computerised maintenance management software (CMMS) system.



Selecting the right system for your facility can pay dividends in increased productivity, higher quality of work and improved service levels but, in order for the benefits to be realised, it is essential that the product is implemented correctly.

CMMS software is a considerable investment for most organisations and many complex processes are involved in its implementation, yet most maintenance managers will have limited opportunities to gain experience of this during their career.

Gary Watkins, Managing Director of maintenance management software provider Service Works Group (SWG), highlights the key steps that will help to ensure a successful software implementation.

A typical implementation can take up to six months and usually includes the following key stages:

Pre-implementation

Once the contract has been awarded to a supplier and signed, the first stage involves an implementation meeting with the relevant stakeholders from the client and software supplier where the project team is decided and the project timetable, deliverables and constraints agreed. The project team will produce the project plan which is then signed off by all parties.

Data input/ import

The data phase is the most important part of the implementation project and can frequently take up to half of the allocated project time. Nowhere is the well-worn adage “rubbish in...rubbish out” more appropriate than in CMMS software, so it is essential that all the necessary information is correctly inputted into the system in order for it to deliver its full potential to the business. This stage of the project provides a good opportunity to review current data and clean it up before importing into the new CMMS tool.

Quality assurance

Whilst the quality assurance phase typically takes a relatively small amount of the allocated implementation time, it is an extremely important area. It is where the database is put through its paces, and thoroughly tested to ensure it meets the organisation’s requirements.

Installation, configuration and training

All software claims to be user friendly, but the diverse nature of CMMS software, its inherent integrated components, and the computer-literacy levels of a typical user make the investment in training as important as the software itself. Most CMMS suppliers will offer a range of training options, including online and train-the-trainer courses, to ensure all users become familiar with the new system, irrespective of job role or location.

Test rollout and user acceptance testing

With administrators and users fully-trained on the new system, the next step is to go live with a test system.

Production rollout

The penultimate phase of the implementation plan is the ribbon-cutting moment when the data is migrated to the production system, and the ‘go live’ button pressed for a full system roll out. Many organisations run the two systems in parallel for a period, before ‘flying solo’ with the new system.

Project sign-off phase

But the project doesn’t end at ‘go-live’. Most software providers will provide post ‘go-live’ support to ensure that the system is working correctly, users and administrators are adequately trained and the business is starting to benefit from the new solution.

The development of an effective and realistic implementation plan is key to guarding against implementation failure and ensuring that the timely delivery of the new CMMS software solution meets the organisation’s needs and delivers a rapid return on investment.

To help businesses make informed decisions, SWG provides a CMMS Toolbox series with a sample business plan template and software project plan, a project plan checklist and best practice for implementation guide, and an ROI calculator. To obtain a complimentary copy of Service Works’ CMMS Toolbox, please email info@swg.com or call +44 (0)20 8877 4080, providing your name and contact details.