

Spring has sprung



Spring has sprung on a humorous note

Sick Leave

I urgently needed a few days off work, but I knew the Boss would not allow me to take a leave. I thought that maybe if I acted "CRAZY" then he would tell me to take a few days off. So, I hung upside down on the ceiling and made funny noises. My co-worker asked me what I was doing.

I told her that I was pretending to be a light bulb so that the Boss would think I was "CRAZY" and give me a few days off. A few minutes later the Boss came into the office and asked, "What are you doing?" I told him I was a light bulb. He said, "You are clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days." I jumped down and walked out of the office.

When my co-worker followed me, the Boss asked her, "And where do you think you're going?" (You're gonna love this.....) She said, "I'm going home too, I can't work in the dark."

http://www.hr.com/en/about_us/fun_box/officehumor_ev2hhq1t.html#sthash.Zu3mNU2j.dpuf



10 Keys to a Smoother, Happier Warehouse Management System Implementation

1. Broadly train employees about what a WMS is and does prior to the project kickoff: Companies new to WMS often take for granted that the broad mass of users and stakeholders of the new system really have a decent understanding of what a WMS is, how it works, drives value, etc. This is in fact rarely the case. Motivational products maker OC Tanner recently began its WMS initiative by providing training, local site visits to WMS user companies and other materials on these basics of WMS. Such an approach provides an excellent foundation for moving forward and will lead to better analysis and decisions later

2. Interview/approve the vendor's project manager: Internal vendor study after vendor study shows it -the number 1 factor in WMS project success is the quality of the WMS vendor's project management. So how do you know if you are getting a good one? No WMS provider can name the project management until it has been selected, and a start date is determined. But far too many companies sign a contract and wait for the vendor's assigned project manager to show up. There is a better way: After the vendor has been selected, but before the contract is signed, ask who the project manager will be, view his or her resume, and do an interview with that person. You of course should be looking for overall experience levels, especially in your industry, and the personal fit and chemistry with your ways and team. Call recent references. Obviously, if there are concerns, asked for another PM before signing the contract. If you fail to do this, and the "other guy" does, which company do you think will wind up with the better project manager, which has such an influence on over project success?

3. Recognize lost time is lost time - it really can't be made back up: WMS implementations are full of challenges and delays, some of them avoidable, some of them not. First, some of this reality should be baked into the schedule from the start - companies planning on perfect schedules and milestone achievement to meet a target go-live date are simply asking for trouble. If you have made a smart schedule, then some delays from the ideal can be absorbed by that cushion. But even then there can be delays. Here's the bottom line - while minor slippages can sometimes be made up, the reality is lost time is usually lost time. The go-live date simply must be pushed back accordingly, as painful as that might be at the time, But we guarantee that pain will almost always be less from a schedule pushback than real pain that will be felt from a poor go-live experience later, when problems erupt from having taken short cuts in testing, training, overall system evaluation and other areas in an attempt to gain back lost time. Management will remember the poor start up much longer than it will remember some schedule delays in a successful launch

4. Focus on validation preparation and execution: There is not enough focus on validation, or the process and steps of defining what an acceptable system looks like and how it performs. The first step is validation prep. That involves getting an agreement between the operations and IT relative to what the quality "gates" are and how they will be measured. Once you have these gates identified, you can actually then define the validation steps/tests necessary to achieve these quality gates. Few companies do this validation prep well, which leads to system go-lives that are not ready. But neither is there enough time dedicated to the validation itself. With the configurability of today's WMS systems, we recommend a substantial amount of time just working on WMS validation. The results are well worth the investment

5. Implement the "best methods" part of labour management: Most experts agree that it usually doesn't make sense to implement a Labour Management System (LMS) at the same time as the WMS is deployed. It adds another element of complexity to the already challenging WMS install, and it is difficult if not impossible to build good discrete engineered standards before the system is up and running and workers know what they are doing. But there is a hybrid approach that can actually enhance the WMS deployment process. One aspect of LMS is the development of "preferred methods" or "best methods" for each task that form the basis for later standards development. This refers to the way workers should physically perform each task. That goes beyond just "scan this, then scan that" to include the physical movement and actions too. By implementing preferred methods, you have all the workers doing the job in the same way. This provides a level of order and precision that can make WMS deployment itself go much smoother. So there are the first five suggestions in our list - we hope you agree these are smart and not commonly suggested actions to take out some of the challenge and risk associated with WMS deployment

6. Make repetition the focus of user training: Many of the training classes offered by the WMS vendors are

what we might call "one and done" programs. Workers go through all the relevant screens, but how much of that can really be retained? The key to a successfully WMS training regime is simply repetition, not only of the main processes - but critically expected exceptions (location overrides, etc.). Repeat the training over and over again until everyone is sick of it - then you will know you have people that are really well trained

7. Do the IT plumbing early: It seems like simple blocking and tackling, but system to system communications, internal websites, proxies to external servers, etc. take time - sometimes a lot of it. The system usually can't function at all without this work. Yet, such effort inexplicably is almost always left until near the end of the project, so that the integrations and the WMS itself must come magically together shortly before go-live. To have a smooth WMS deployment, get IT on this work early - it should be well ahead of the functional part of the WMS deployment. Additionally, testing to make sure all of it is reliable and performs well of course needs to be part of the validation plan. It is common for integrations to look like they work, on a basic data set, only to break under the duress of real operations, doing great damage to the go-live. Don't let this happen by getting started on the plumbing work right away

8. Plan for extensive performance scenarios/testing: For one customer of Mark's company, which does some 50,000 order lines per pick wave, he developed a set of components that allow the company to run at 75%, 100%, 150% and 200% of normal volume to validate performance and ability to scale. There is nothing worse than having a solid system but one that does not perform well under high volumes. The vendor is usually able to address these scale issues - if they have the time, before go-live. Trying to deal with scale issues when the system is actually running the DC can cause real problems, as users and managers lose faith in the system

9. Over-involve operations in decision making: Operational managers are busy, but they have to make the time to be involved in the decision making regarding system setup. This needs to start up-front in the validation prep phase, through configuration, to final validation. They should not be "handed over" a system from IT, and instead be heavily involved in the crafting of the system themselves. That may sound obvious, but our significant experience shows that it is simply often not the case

10. Do as much end-to-end testing as possible: Too often, WMS testing is done in what we might call an incomplete basis. By that we mean part of the full process is tested, but not the end to end result. The full "round trip" of the function or transaction needs to be tested and validated, not that the function itself seems to be working. Here is an easy example: you can receive orders and do the picking, but are the shipment confirms really being sent up and correctly processed in the order management and inventory systems? Virtually all testing scenarios should be defined as testing the end-to-end process, whereas today they are often broken into separate test scripts, which can mask issues. So there are 10 ideas for improving WMS deployment results. Someday we will add another 10, but following the steps listed here will greatly improve your chances of WMS go-live success

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Orange Recruiting (Pty) Ltd
Company Registration Number: 2005/041787/07
Tel: +27 11 807 8102 | +27 82 550 0959
www.orangerecruiting.co.za
P O Box 5322, Rivonia, 2128,
357 Rivonia Boulevard, Rivonia