
8 Steps to a Successful System Implementation

Have you ever been involved in a project that didn't go so well? A common issue in designing and commissioning a new Materials Handling System is system requirements not being clearly defined up front. The end user knows what he or she wants, but he or she is not exactly sure how it should be accomplished. This one simple omission during a project's life can wreck any chances of having a successful project implementation. Following these 8 steps will tremendously improve your chances of a successful project from start to finish.

Consulting

It's important to find a company that listens, can comprehend your particular needs and concerns, can analyze it all, and put it in perspective for you, efficiently and effectively. You are looking for an unbiased solution.

Controls Integration

A material handling project is only as successful as the control system. Many companies are realizing the system controls as first priority when planning for automation. Your system isn't exactly the same as anyone else's, but you may have some of the same issues. Safety, system interfaces, products, warranties, and how to put it all together are just a few of the things to consider.

Project Management

The technical abilities of a supplier are long forgotten if your project is not managed properly. You need a supplier who commits to on-time, on budget and professional project management. Don't forget about on-site – your supplier needs to be willing to walk the walk on your floor.

General Design Document

The first deliverable on your project should be the General Design Document. This single piece of documentation is a key to the project's success. The General Design Document is best thought of as a manual that you and your supplier take joint ownership, which provides three very important functions: a complete description of your system that you and your support staff understands

a "road map" for the supplier's engineering and management team to build the system

a document that manages your the collective expectations of your company and the supplier's on the project outcome.



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Hardware Design

The supplier should be responsible for the generation of CAD (Computer Aided Design) drawings that represent the way in which the components and assemblies are to be constructed. To insure that your project is manufactured and installed properly, dozens of clearly defined drawings needs to be provided. These drawings leave little chance for errors in the process.

Software Design

PLC or a PC? This is a common question for today's control architecture. Some systems may require both. PCs are best suited for information handling and management whereas PLC are best utilized for real-time motion and machinery control. You need a supplier whose team has experience in both major solution sets.

Manufacturing & Installation

Your system needs to be built and installed with the highest degree of craftsmanship and adherence to specifications. Control Panels should be designed and built to UL Standards and all installations should be staffed with seasoned veterans in the industry who are well versed in the latest edition of the National Electric Code (NEC)

Training

Your maintenance and support staff must know the system like the back of their hands or you can't be confident that your operation will always run smoothly and efficiently. Your best defense against system failures is a thoroughly trained staff armed with the right system documentation. Your supplier should be able to provide the proper hands on training to go hand-in-hand with the General Design Document, detailed CAD drawings, software documentation and installation manuals.

About the Author

David Sellers has 10+ years experience in automated materials handling, most of which has been "on the factory floor" designing and implementing conveyor control systems. He is currently the Production Manager for Insight Automation; the proven leader in innovative control system solutions for materials handling applications. Dave can be reached by email at dsellers@insightautomation.cc or by phone at 1-800-764-6356
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