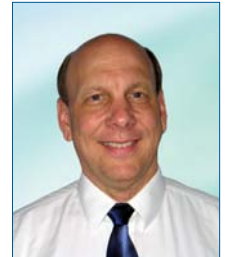




Strategies for a Smooth Technology Deployment

How Equal Parts Planning and Experience Ensure the Perfect Rollout

» Deploying new technology can be a challenge—especially when it affects your operations and end-user productivity. From desktop refreshes and OS upgrades to data center initiatives and networking projects, new technology rollouts demand considerable planning and test even the deepest reserves of experience. In this issue of Meet the Expert, John Wall, VP of Service, discusses strategies to ensure your organization’s next IT project is seamless from design to deployment.



Q: A lot of organizations are moving to Windows 7 this year, and the problem with OS upgrades—and a lot of other technology projects—is that they can disrupt operations. They can really put a burden on the IT staff. What are a few steps organizations can take to ensure a better chance of a smooth rollout?

A: Most importantly, we need to find out what the client really expects to accomplish. It’s not just an upgrade to Windows 7—there are features within that operating system that they really want to key on. We need to make sure that those are brought to the table, and that they work to the customer’s expectations at the end of the rollout. That, coupled with the proper testing and planning, helps ensure that what the customer gets at the end of the project is exactly what they expected.

Q: Can you point to one thing that a majority of organizations that you’ve worked with have done that has allowed them to go into a major project and get it done correctly?

A: The organizations that communicate well with their whole end-user community and get buy-in from all the stakeholders—those seem to be the most successful.

Q: What have been the one or two mistakes that you’ve seen repeated by some organizations that have led to a bad rollout?

A: The thing I’ve seen repeatedly is clients that get in a big hurry and don’t properly test their existing applications, or those applications they intend to upgrade, at the same time as the OS upgrade. That can be a nightmare—to go through the trouble of the whole upgrade process—only to find out that some application that is vital to the accounting department does not function correctly with the new operating system.

Q: At what point in the process to organizations usually reach out for help on a major project—and is that the appropriate time or should they be reaching out at a different time?

A: That’s case by case, really. Some of our clients have highly skilled and well-trained IT staffs. In that scenario, we might not be brought in until late in the planning process, just to lend some consulting expertise or act as a sounding board for their own upgrade plan. The value we bring is our experience and having been there and done that. They don’t have to reinvent the wheel. We’ve already seen some of the problems that are waiting out there and we can help you avoid them. Many times, clients will have an aggressive timetable, but not enough personnel to execute the project and tend to their daily IT activities. This is a perfect opportunity for a staff augmentation. At the other end of the spectrum are clients with minimal IT staff. These clients generally bring us in early in the process and often rely on us from beginning to end. This includes everything from the pre-planning and discovery phase to the project execution and post-project support.

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Q: What other types of deployments can GovConnection handle for an organization?

A: We can do anything from a basic tech refresh, which is just the hardware, to a large-scale move—floor to floor, building to building, or city to city. We've helped some national clients roll out 1,200 to 1,400 branches in a very compacted timeframe, basically refreshing every piece of equipment in each branch. Regardless of what's being deployed, we can offer a project plan to suit any customer. In other words, we can upgrade all or part of the client's user base entirely at the client's site, or orchestrate a mail-in type technology refresh, or provide a hybrid of the two.

Q: Can you describe your approach to a large technology deployment project?

A: At a high level, first we'd gain an understanding of the client's objectives, expectations, and timelines. From there, we would scope the project and generate a statement of work. Once accepted, we would perform a proof of concept. This generally involves loading, testing, and remediation on a small number of units. From there, we'd like to perform a pilot, if we could. Depending on the client's timeframe, it's often a good idea to run a test pilot. Many times, companies offer up their own IT departments as guinea pigs. After the successful pilot, we'll formulate a detailed

workflow within WebSPOC, our single-point-of-contact software solution tool. WebSPOC breaks down all the repeatable processes and all the parts of the deployment that the team will follow. After that, it's execute, execute, execute. We make sure that we properly staff and meet all the scheduled timelines. Lastly, we provide any post-project support the client might need.

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