



ERP Anxiety?

Part II: Preparing Your Team

Five Ways to Reduce ERP Anxiety

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In Part I we identified a typical list of concerns from institutions preparing to implement an ERP system.

Now that you're armed with an awareness of what the possible ERP project concerns may be within your institution, the next step is to deal with these concerns and work to reduce stakeholder concerns.

In this second installment we outline with five key ways to manage ERP anxiety on your campus

1. Know your stakeholders.

Stakeholders are not created equal. Take the time to analyze and understand the stakeholders for your implementation project. Determine their needs and expectations. Then determine what you need from these stakeholders to help your project be successful.

Use your communication tools and experts to tailor the messages you're sending to students, faculty, and staff. Messages that you deliver to the staff in your functional and technical offices are not the same messages you would delivery to your faculty. Students will have an entirely separate set of interests and concerns with the project.



2. Engage your stakeholders.

One of the most important ways to reduce ERP anxiety is to engage your stakeholders. One of the best ways to engage stakeholders is to give them a voice—a voice to share their fears, concerns, issues, and unanswered questions.

Provide an open environment for engaging stakeholders to help foster a sense of involvement in the process to gain buy-in and support for the project. Offer your stakeholder community the chance to raise questions and provide feedback. Possible avenues include formal assessment processes, online surveys, forum discussions, or facilitated brainstorming sessions.

3. Focus on communications.

While communications is one of the top concerns stakeholders have concerning an ERP implementation, communications is also an effective tool to address other top concerns. Following are some communication strategies:

- Consider dedicating a communications specialist to deliver regular updates to your stakeholders – via broadcast emails, newsletter or campus publications articles, or even periodic town hall meetings.
- Vary your communications approach and provide regular updates to keep your stakeholders involved.
- Launch a project website. Even if you are in the early planning stages for your project, dedicate web space to the effort. Post reference articles, links to informative sites, and other important information relevant to your project.

4. Focus on education and setting realistic expectations.

Many of the top concerns or misconceptions result from lack of information. Educate your staff, faculty, and students on the benefits of an ERP solution. Help them understand what to expect in terms of impact to services, current processes, and what improvements your institution will realize from this implementation.

Help them understand how their jobs will be impacted in specific terms (e.g. an automated degree audit process for the Registrar's office versus a time-consuming manual process).

At the same time, provide your stakeholders with realistic expectations including the following:

- Duration and schedule of the project.
- Effort required for the project.
- Processes to be used to manage the project.
- Support and training to be provided.

5. Focus on planning.

Your institution will likely partner with an ERP solution provider or implementer who will help you plan the implementation project. Your institution also can begin its own planning efforts to address the organizational impacts. Some of these areas include:

- Examining your current staffing levels in the departments that will be most impacted by the implementation.
- Considering who from your institution will be well-suited to leadership roles in the project.
- Analyzing the project management practices at your institution and determine if the right skills are in place to manage this large and complex project.
- Communicating, educating, and setting expectations throughout your planning processes.

Knowing the top concerns your stakeholders may have will help you know the right steps to take to reduce ERP anxiety at your institution. Once you're fully prepared to address those concerns, you can effectively help ease the minds of all those involved and focus on getting your team ready to successfully face the challenge ahead.

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